

The Center group that threatened Moscow in haste and confusion will make mistakes, one after another, right up to the borders of East Prussia! But it will be later, and now the heroic inhabitants of the Western Front did not know that there, at Headquarters, the issue of renaming their front, appointing a new commander, a member of the Military Council, and a chief of staff was being decided. And here, too, there was vanity, big and small intrigues, their likes and dislikes! It is much easier to form the headquarters of a new front, but converting the old one into a new one is not an easy task! The old-timers of the front headquarters, having heard about the upcoming changes, raced to their

patron friends, who were well acquainted in service, study ... And each of them wanted to strengthen their

positions, stay in a warm place and not wander around somewhere in obscurity, in the front-line reserves created by personnel officers. And if there were such a device that captures the striving of human intentions and the amount of energy spent to achieve one goal - not to let oneself be pushed from a familiar place, well, and if you change it, then with benefit - then this device would mark sleepless nights, painful thoughts and would show mental tricks, various combinations ... What the unfortunate people did not invent, just to sit in their mink, like a wise gudgeon! Everything that could affect the retention of a place was put into action: sycophancy, servility, and even the distant acquaintance of their wives by the garrison! But the one who had his "hand" in the General Staff, the People's Commissariat - they could be calm - they will make an exception for them; left in place and

will be demoted.

Chapter XVI. FRONT RUMORS

Not a single mathematical model could reflect the creation of such teams as the headquarters of the front. The creators of modern history will also be unable to reveal the mystery of their conception and birth!

There is not a word about this in the memoirs of famous commanders, but there would be something to tell about. But they, in the general atmosphere of the Great Victory, did not want to overshadow her forehead with a description of some trifles like the selection of personnel. GlavPU and Glavlit would protest, explaining that this does not fit into the framework of social realism and could harm the upbringing of a Soviet person! Literary critics, who were not even close to the marshal's memoirs, by the way, written by smart, capable, but completely unscrupulous people, confident that their work will pass with the unanimous approval of the public and positive reviews in the periodical press. And not one of those who had to deal with the commander's presentations of the invoice, sometimes biased, sometimes frankly overestimating the ability of the authors in terms of battles won, did not come out with a refutation of outright lies! And, as a rule, memoirs, with some exceptions, were presented in an uninteresting way - in a boring and poor language, with a complete absence of emotional experiences on the decisions made and the doubts that arise. Perhaps only tireless personnel officers - hardware hooks, could tell in a fascinating way about the selection, placement of the base of the pyramid, where the front stood at the top - a person who was not discussed by anyone and appointed by the Supreme himself!

It was a difficult task to select staff officers - officers - for the commander even for an experienced personnel officer. For this, information about his habits and tastes was collected from his former places of service. Everything was taken into account: what tea he drinks, what pencils he prefers, what kind of vodka he deigns to use, and many other household trifles. Of course, the personnel officers were obliged to find out about this. They answered with their heads for those unknown people who shared with the commander his difficult front-line life full of various upheavals! And they believed that his environment should be pleasant in form

content and preferably silent, but quick-witted according to the circumstances! If the candidacy

for the post of chief of his staff was negotiated with him at Headquarters, then the Member of the Military Council, in the old commissar of the front, was appointed by the Supreme Commander himself! This was how a counterweight was achieved while observing the principle of one-man command!

The front commander could never voluntarily get rid of the appointed commissar: even if they did not tolerate each other, they were forced to meekly go about their business. The established order and the will of the Supreme were above mutual ambitions and grievances. In those days, all preparations for changes in

the headquarters of the front were kept in great secret, but rumors knew no obstacles. Sometimes they appeared from scratch, but just like a weak echo, they faded away without real confirmation and an appropriate alignment of events. But they were also very stable! They were discussed with interest because they were associated with prominent personalities. Thus, not without reason, a rumor appeared that the

Member of the Military Council, General Mekhlis[30], would soon be relieved of his post. There was only one reason - he did not work well with the commander, General of the Army Sokolovsky. There were different stories about Mekhlis along the front. An almost fantastic figure grew out of contradictory rumors! That he, supposedly like the old commissars, despised the dugout specially made with all the conveniences and often spent the night on the front line, under the same raincoat with machine gunners, and ate with them from the same pot. There were even those who spent the day and night with him on the front line! One swore and swore that he had given him his tarpaulin boots, because his chrome general's boots had fallen apart. And another claimed that he had witnessed how the general gave his driver a monthly salary, having learned that his hut had burned down in the village! Such epics were composed mainly among the soldiers. They wanted to have such a chief commissar: fair, who shared with them all the hardships and hardships of the war and very exacting to the father commanders. There was a story about this too. Somewhere on the Don, having caught the regiment commander and his political officer drunk in the dugout, he demoted the latter to the rank and file, and gave the regiment commander to the tribunal and immediately led the regiment to attack and drove the Germans out of the farm!

Soldiers' rumors about him - their protector, noble unmercenary - flew ahead of him! If you add up all the stories, it would turn out that he was on all fronts almost simultaneously! The blissful stories of the soldier's imagination about such a frenzy of the commissar were completely opposite to the stories about him among the generals, high-ranking political workers. The most bilious, irritable, petty in insults, vindictive even over trifles - this is a brief outline of the only person who could address the Supreme by name and patronymic in memory of those days when he worked under fire from the opposition in the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. In contrast to the naive soldiers' tales about a real heroic commissar, here they knew that he was often engaged in denunciation! He was unnecessarily picky about commanders and political workers when visiting combat units of the front line. And the well-known story of May 1942, during the Crimean operation, when he imposed his will on the more cautious and delicate General Kozlov, and as a result, the German General Manstein defeated their army: two hundred thousand prisoners, the entire southeastern Crimea speaking of the thousands of dead and wounded who were dying of lack of water on the way to Kerch. The Supreme forgave, postponing the trial of his guilt for the post-war period! And after some time, moving away from the Crimean defeat, he forgot about his mistakes, taking long medical treatment in Arkhangelsk near Moscow and, being a member of the Military Council on one of the fronts, tirelessly wrote denunciations to the commander, but was soon recalled from there, was in the reserve of the Headquarters, and then was sent again and again recalled! These arts, perhaps, would not be forgiven to anyone, but he got away with everything.

Chapter XVII. WHO CHECKED THE DEPARTMENT

Sazonov was aware of front-line gossip and was surprised at many things, but now his thoughts were occupied only with the forthcoming check. And, finally, tired of waiting, he waited for the arrival of the inspectors. There were four of them - two

majors and two captains. One major was about thirty. Sergey Nikolaevich Kovalev, with a blush on his cheeks and attentive gray eyes, was the leader of the group. It was taken before the war from the fourth year of the Faculty of Law of Moscow University to strengthen the organs, exsanguinated at the initiative of the chief himself - Yezhov. At the beginning of the war, when there was an increased demand for special officers, the main backbone of the Center left for leadership positions in special departments of the Red Army. Tumanov also left, becoming the head of the N Army Department and taking with him his subordinate and favorite, at that time Sergeant Kovalev, and kept him nearby, waiting for him to gain experience in order to make him his deputy. He valued his favorite for his literacy and ability to grasp the essence of the matter, for his energy and diplomatic abilities.

The second major was over forty: mild-mannered, well-read, fluent in German, he suffered before the war for being close to a repressed man; the country's head of counterintelligence. During the investigation, he "confessed" himself guilty, for which he despised himself, and if it were not for the war and the efforts of his friends who insisted on his release as a professional agent on the German line, he would have remained in the camp! After his release, he worked for some time in Moscow with the exposed Abwehr agents. At that time, his group established the distinctive features of passports made in Germany to legalize their agents in the USSR. Accuracy and quality failed German intelligence: the paperclip in the middle of their passport was made of high-quality stainless steel. In our domestic passport, the paper clip was made from simple wire and left a rusty mark in the middle of the passport. A lot of Abwehr agents were exposed on these grounds!

Then he led the training of personnel for work in partisan special detachments. He could not work at the Center next to those who beat him to testify. He was sharp-tongued and once, for the phrase that our own dignity in Lubyanka could shorten life, he was invited to the secretary of the party organization of the department, where he was given a suggestion and a reminder of his Lefortovo confessions. For this reason, he withdrew into himself and became addicted to medical alcohol in company with the old Zemstvo doctor Chetverukhin, a neighbor in the stairwell.

And only in the forty-third year he managed to go to the front. When his rights were restored, his party experience was credited not from 1920, but from the moment a new party card was issued, and when a new form was introduced, he, the captain of state security, was certified as a major, while he should have received a rank no less than a colonel. All this, taken together, lay on his soul like a heavy burden of resentment and constantly upset him. He was a native of the Vilna province and inherited from his father, a gymnasium teacher, the surname Krasovsky, and at baptism he was given the name Zinovy. The third

inspector, thin and tall, in his thirties, a captain by the name of Razin, was considered in their department to be a specialist in combating anti-Soviet manifestations. Before the war, he worked for two years in the secret political department of the Rostov Regional Directorate of the NKVD.

Another captain - Slobodenyuk - had a phenomenal memory for the content of the current instructions, orders, orientations of the Smersh Main Directorate, and when checking, he could, with his eyes closed, find the shortcomings of their implementation. In his personal file lay a severe reprimand for alcohol abuse. And now, checking the peripheral departments, he showed diligence, hoping that his zeal would be noticed, and the reprimand would be removed.

A less capable or, as the people say, mediocre person, with great conceit and ambition, in order to establish himself in his environment, strives to be always in sight. So it happened with Bondarev. How he longed for the inspectors to pay attention to him and appreciate his recent success in selecting a reconnaissance group. He even started a folder for this, where he put copies of reports of informants, verification materials obtained from official

sources. I collected this on purpose so that in a conversation with the inspectors it would be easier to convince them of my Chekist abilities.

First for his conversation, Bondarev chose Major Krasovsky, believing that age, good breeding and their equality in ranks would make it possible to win him over. He was firmly convinced that the major would be interested in his information, and then he would be able to casually mention the facts of the political immaturity of his boss, and if the head were more prepared, they say, the success of the department would be much higher! And

without any insight it was possible to catch in Bondarev's bragging, his primitive explanations on the selection of a reconnaissance group, a frank hint at the indecision and reinsurance of his boss. The major silently listened to Alexei Mikhailovich, and he interpreted the silence as agreement with the presentation of the facts and added a few more remarks to his boss. Severity appeared on the major's face - he stopped his interlocutor in mid-sentence: - You, it seems, my dear, sang an aria from the

wrong opera! Do you think that we have come here to sort out your relationship with the head of the department?! And if you don't, then why are you taking me away from the case?! We are here not only looking for flaws, but also intend to help you in your current affairs! Bondarev did not expect and did not foresee such a

turn, and tried to prove that Comrade Major had misunderstood him. Krasovsky, however, showed with all his appearance that the conversation was over, and delved into the papers lying in front of him. Realizing that he failed to interest the inspector, Alexei Mikhailovich left him upset. He didn't like the major - wow, he called him a darling, and even read a notation that he had come here to do business! If he were a real party member, he would show an interest in how things are in the department, what is the mood, what is the political tempering of the personnel? These are the questions he would ask the major if they switched places! And he remembered what a master he was in fishing out "fried" facts from his wards, who came

from the regions. He did not hesitate to ask about everything: who drinks and how much, who sleeps with whom, not disdaining gossip, idle fictions, rumors about life

regional apparatus. It was from his filing that it was established that the newborn of the prosecutor's couple was baptized in the church. All of this has been investigated. The fact was confirmed and the prosecutor was expelled from the party; then he barely got a job as a bathhouse attendant - he was not hired anywhere, because he was expelled for a gross violation of the party charter. And he also remembered that the deputy chairman of the regional council Ivanushkin himself admired his ability to find out details about the life of the district: he always asked him to throw something interesting for the deputy session and certainly praised him for it,

included him in the closed list for a cash prize. And, recalling the old days of civilian life, successes at work, a calm and measured life in the regional council, Bondarev sighed heavily and went to Kuzakov to share his doubts about the business qualities of the inspectors, the fool leads them! And he knew in advance that Kuzakov would listen, would agree, but would not lift a finger on a finger in order to use his connections and help him topple Sazonov. He was irritated by Kuzakov's caution and indecision. He pushed him to action, but he said that he needed to gain a foothold here, in the division, and in connection with the departure of the Member of the Military Council Mekhlis, changes should be expected in the entire political department of the front - then he would take action. Time passed, Bondarev had such trump cards against Sazonov in his hands, and he did not have the opportunity to report to Colonel Tumanov how his subordinate was undermining the foundations of the service, corrupting the operational staff with his actions! He was seething with impatience and all the time looked into the cherished notebook, memorizing his diatribe.

With the arrival of the inspectors, Sazonov sat in his dugout without getting out in order to be closer to them and, when necessary, immediately give information on any issue. He had already gotten used to their presence in the department - all of them were not so thirsty for the blood of those being tested, as he had imagined at first. In addition, he found that Kovalev and Krasovsky often restrained the zeal of their two captains to find fault with the timing of the execution of orders for Glavka, compliance with the instructions for office work, reporting forms and other flaws in no one's favorite paperwork.

Already on the first day, at dinner, Krasovsky, looking at the order, medal and stripes for the wounds of Sazonov, asked about the awards of the operational staff. Dmitry Vasilyevich frankly said that not all of his officers have military awards. - Why are our special

officers there, - he noted bitterly, - for Smolensk, the division commander only became "Krasnoznamennets", and the chief of staff was awarded the Order of the Patriotic 2nd degree ... This is almost the same as our division commander. While they fought for real, he drank purified vodka in the second echelon and slept recklessly with all the nurses! The conversation became

general, and someone said: - Coyechno, sparingly marked the division. They say that more awards are given on the southern fronts - more than a hundred "Heroes" alone were awarded for crossing the Dnieper, and our army also crossed the Dnieper in two places and liberated Smolensk ... But someone answered: - Smolensk is not

Kiev, and the Dnieper is here Krasovsky exchanged glances with Kovalev and began:

"Have you heard the latest anecdote about awards in our service?! So, the head of the Special Department of the Air Army came to the Smersh department of the fighter division and began to scold the local chief about the fact that there were no results in operational work - there were few cases, no arrests. And he replies that there is no one to develop - all the order bearers, some have two or three orders of the Red Banner, and the regiment commanders are Heroes of the Union. Then his chief says: do, they say, tomorrow, under any pretext, a drill inspection of the personnel of the division, and I will show you who needs to be developed and arrested! In the morning, the personnel were lined up and the senior special officer inspected the entire formation and said: "There, you see, on the left flank, five subchiks are standing without awards, so start business with them! "I can't," replies the divosobist. "Why?" "Yes, these are my detectives."

Everyone laughed in unison, and the stories began, how they are awarded and what collisions happen at the same time. So, Captain Razin in a muffled voice told how one company commander was presented for an award for a heroic deed. A lot of time has passed: the regimental commander was offended by the inattention and sends a submission for the second time. AND

again they are silent. Then he sends for the third time, and suddenly a month later three Orders of the Red Star come to the commander at once. The people around had no idea what was going on in the soul of Major Krasovsky. All the life he lived and the trials that fell to his lot aged him ahead of time, and everything that had passed was seen by him no longer in a romantic foggy haze of years, in a struggle with a defeated class, but as disgusting violence, according to party directives, against a gullible

mass. Well, how to forget December of the twenty-ninth year, in fact, the last year of the existence of the NEP. The quiet, painful voice of the chairman of the OGPU Menzhinsky was barely audible in the back rows of the meeting room. In absolutely settled silence came the clatter of wheels from Lubyanka Square, the clatter of horseshoes on the cobblestone pavement, and the sonorous trill of trams. The chairman, in an edifying tone, was still calmly talking about the tasks of building a classless society, strengthening the planned state economy, eliminating private property, and that the retreat of the party was over and it was entering a new stage in history! And, turning to the tasks of the OGPU, he began with a philosophical reasoning that any destroyed way of society, at the first opportunity, returns to its old forms again. Therefore, the organs of our state, day after day, more and more widely, must penetrate into the depths of our society, into its minds! To see all the emerging processes and to identify the fragments of the old world, not to let them stick together, merge, unite into groups, organizations, formations of any kind, be it creative, professional, theological and any other ... As an armed detachment of the party, as the first phalanx of our society, the Chekists must identify, generalize and take prompt measures to prevent the emergence of unregulated processes in our society. It was a speech by an educated intellectual-politician who spoke not only all European

languages, but also half a dozen Asian ones. "He wouldn't hold a proletarian sword in his hands, but a chair at a university," Krasovsky thought back then. After Menzhinsky, he repeatedly heard Heinrich Yagoda, then Yezhov and his deputy Beria. The level of education of the leadership of the bodies has noticeably decreased. He memorized the performance

Lavrenty Pavlovich on the eve of his arrest. It was tough, demanding, and Beria himself, who had succeeded and got his hand on numerous assets in Georgia, enjoyed his Georgian pronunciation. And many people liked it, because the Leader was also Georgian: he spoke with an accent and also knew that the whole country liked it! But unlike Menzhinsky, Beria did not study the humanitarian course, he had his own style, the style of a party member devoted to the Leader! Recalling his first and last meeting with Beria, Krasovsky remembered abrupt, chopped phrases to the effect that the wider the net of information, the more interesting information about the life of our masses would be in it. And the network of awareness should permeate our entire society, so we will know more about it and be able to develop tactics to suppress hostile manifestations in any environment, in various situations! And until now, a voice with a reinforced Georgian accent sounded in my ears: "We should not be in the role of firefighters. Somewhere it started, and we fly at full speed to extinguish the flame. But when everything is in smoke and flames, it is more difficult for a firefighter to work - there can be a waste of time, materials and sacrifice! And if the inspector came in time, examined, warned, then there would be no fire and damage! Only information and agents allowed the authorities to identify, warn, influence the minds of people and their actions. And then decide what to do: warn them, or maybe stop them right away, depending on the scale of events, the number of people, possible political damage. Our party teaches us to approach events dialectically, but class interests must be respected. This is our compass in political life!.." And what happened two years before that? And the

hot summer of 1936 clearly came to mind. It was known in the Lubyanka that the Leader was resting in his residence near Sochi. And suddenly there was a telegram from People's Commissar Yezhov. Rumors spread about its content, which indicated that in the countries of the capitalist encirclement, punitive bodies in the fight against the working class use any means, and therefore it is necessary to respond with the same measures in the fight against espionage and other subversive activities of enemy intelligence! This was the signal for the Great Terror in the country. And the Leader knew who to entrust the implementation of his directives, and did not doubt the diligence of the former employee of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Comm

For five days and nights, the leadership of the People's Commissariat at a frantic pace prepared materials for the issuance of orders and instructions for operational and investigative work. So began this hot summer, the general beating of the arrested, the obligatory night interrogations for investigators! Fate favored Krasovsky - she did not allow him to participate in this wild bacchanalia. As a specialist in German intelligence, he was busy exposing the agents of the German General Staff. The case ended with the expulsion of two diplomats from the German embassy in Moscow, the arrest of an Abwehr agent, a jeweler by profession, and the interception of valuables worth several million rubles. For which he was marked in the order of

the People's Commissariat. Two volcanic years flew by with a creak after the fateful Sochi telegram of the Leader. Several revealing trials took place in Moscow, and then, quietly, without the public and lawyers, the Special Conference[31] and the famous "troikas"[32] started working at full capacity. The fire of repression spread to the periphery. It was a time when

organs were feared in the country like fire! In Uman, where Krasovsky was on a business trip, the local department of the NKVD was located on Dobrolyubova Street - the townsfolk began to call it Dushegubova Street. When meeting with employees of the authorities, they crossed to the other side of the street. Everyone whispered about the arrests, there were various rumors about conspiracies against the government, sabotage, and the omnipotence of the authorities. And the radio and the press trumpeted

and called for the exposure of the enemies of the people! But the blow was dealt to the Chekists themselves. Yezhov's "mittens" reached their own cohort. Lubyanka was the first to suffer. Many of its leading employees were in close relations with the repressed party elite and went through their cases as criminal connections subject to arrest. Krasovsky could not believe then that his colleagues, who during the civil war and after it, risking their lives, carried out the tasks of the party, suddenly suddenly became spies and pests! But they confessed, and he himself was convinced of this, getting acquainted with the protocols of their interro

In the second half of the thirty-eighth year, the Politburo of the party adopted a closed resolution, where it was expressed no confidence in the highest officials of state security and it was also decided to strengthen

People's Commissariat forced new personnel. Thus, graduates of higher party schools and military academies came to leading work in the organs. They were distinguished by boundless devotion to the cause of the party and personally to the Leader of the peoples, which arose, basically, not from love and respect, but from the general fear of the merciless force of repression. The party managed to replace the repressed NKVD officers - and there were about fifteen thousand of them - but the professional experience gained in the era of the revolution was lost, and the principles of social law, humanity and revolutionary nobility were left there! In addition, the continuity necessary for the secret service between the older and new generations that came to replace him was violated. The hasty mass promotion to leadership positions without studying the personal qualities, abilities of future intelligence and counterintelligence leaders, relying only on loyalty to the party and the famous Leninist "every communist must be a Chekist" caused bitter disappointment and annoyance among the remaining cadres. It was at that time that an anecdote was born on the Lubyanka about a leading person from among the party supporters. He receives a report from an operative about the planned recruitment of a foreigner, which indicated that the recruitment of the future agent would be carried out under a "foreign" flag [33]. The head of the resolution noted: "Why ped strangers? What, we don't have our own flag?!"

Much later, Krasovsky realized that the incompetence of the majority of the party mobilized allowed them to give any orders without the risk that they would have doubts about the necessity and legality of their execution. It was convenient for the leadership of the party and the NKVD! Many of the party replenishment, as it became known to him upon his return from Kolyma, were weeded out, unable to withstand the pace of work in the organs, nervous overload, and obligatory night vigils. But some part adapted, consolidated, got involved, gradually increasing their KGB work experience.

Chapter XVIII. FIND THE GUILT

Krasovsky in his heart was prejudiced against those who arrived at the bodies on the party assignment, but his current boss, Major Kovalev Sergey Nikolaevich, was an exception for him. In the department, he was valued for his efficiency, tenacity of mind: he could reconstruct the picture of an event from minor details. In addition, he was a moderate supporter of the accusatory bias in operational developments, and strictly adhered to the law in matters of inquiry. Colonel Tumanov called him a "lawyer" for his adherence to legal norms, but he was always confident in the objectivity of his judgments and conclusions on emerging cases.

Major Kovalev was a sincere person; from the student body, openness and the ability to appreciate friendship were preserved in him. Four courses of the law faculty of Moscow University gave him the opportunity to logically and clearly express his thoughts and be the main compiler of memorandums for reporting to the front-line department of counterintelligence. In his university education, a deep impression was left by the lectures of representatives of a free-thinking bias and a new one - headed by a rising star in the legal firmament - Professor Vyshinsky. What old schools legal lawyers remained of the old school were the doubts brought into his consciousness on questions of the domestic policy of the Soviet state, and from the new school, the need for coercive measures in the construction of socialism in a single country, with the growing resistance of the overthrown classes! He had a vague idea of the scale and true direction of the repressions before entering the authorities. Once, and this happened shortly after the liberation of Smolensk, Tumanov instructed him to carry out search activities among the personnel of their army to identify persons who had anything to do with or knew under what circumstances the Smolensk Party Archive[34] fell into the hands of the Germans. No one, except

for the all-powerful head of Smersh, General Abakumov, knew the intention of these events. Only he was privy to their backstory. How could the general forget that May day in the belated spring of 1942!

He was unexpectedly summoned to the Kremlin by the Boss himself! The General had rarely seen him so excited. Without greeting, he met him with the words: "Comrade Abakumov, do you feel when your subordinates are lying to you ?!" And without waiting for an answer, gaining momentum in anger, with an even greater accent, flashing a yellow-brown (out of age!) gleam in his eyes, he passed him menacing, implacable, smelling of strong tobacco. And the general madly wanted at that moment not only to stretch out, which was done, but to fall on his knees, kiss the Leader's hands and accept any punishment from them! Well, he, who knew how to determine true loyalty at a glance, understood the general's state of mind and, tired of a flash of anger, continued: "Your people reported to me in August last year that during the retreat from Smolensk, everything valuable and worthy was evacuated to the East, and now it turns out that they forgot the most important thing - the party archive! They criminally forgot and gave the Nazis the most valuable weapon! You, general, are still a boy and you don't know what the archive of the party is, and I can see from your eyes that you don't know and don't imagine how much this gibberish will cost our party and state!" Then the storm passed, and, breathing in the fresh spring air with relief, the general got into his Packard with the number MA-09-99. Unable to resist, he nevertheless went to Kolpachny lane: there his faithful servant, Colonel Kochegarov, had already looked after a mansion for his permanent residence, where Dr. Snegirev's eye clinic had been before the revolution. In the evening of the same day, the efficient secretariat prepared a certificate for the general about what could be in the Smolensk party archive, and in the reception room was already sitting pale and shaking with fear, the chief archivist of the state October archive depository, a Bolshevik with pre-revolutionary experience, Joseph Perelman. But how could he know why and why he was brought to the Lubyanka? But Abakumov knew that from the certificate he would not draw what a living, terrified specialist could tell about the significance of the archives. The owner, as always, was right! It turns out that all the documents from the time of the creation of the first Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the first provincial committee of the RCP (b) were stored there! Well, of course, all the decisions and resolutions sent from the Central Committee of the party during the civil war settled there.

"You see, Comrade General," said Perelman, who had already realized that he would not be shot, "there were also closed owls. secret resolutions of the Central Committee, the Politburo on the struggle against the political parties of the Cadets, right and left Social Revolutionaries, against political banditry, reactionary churchmen, as well as all materials on the right and left deviations of the struggle against the kulaks!

And then the archivist, who had already completely recovered from fear, drank strong and very sweet tea with pleasure and sincerely laughed at the general's comparison: tea should be strong and sweet, like a woman's kiss! Abakumov possessed natural abilities to quickly grasp the main thread and matter of the essence of the matter. Now he was fully convinced how much the Master was more foresight and foresaw the possible damage from the loss of the party archive of one area. Only He clearly imagined that the archive, like a drop of water, reflected all the secrets of the difficult life and struggle of the party headed by him, the secrets of creating a state of double and even triple internal control, unprecedented in the history of the state! And it was supposed to last forever! Well, who would have thought that in two months of the war, enemy troops would take Smolensk! And where were those who were supposed to follow the instructions of the Central Committee of the Party and the Defense Committee to evacuate property and state archives?! And the blame for everything, as the Leader believed, was Russian slovenliness, the irresponsibility of these fat officials!

The general carefully listened to the old Bolshevik and called - a messenger came in, handing a voluminous package to Perelman. The general thanked the archivist and said goodbye to him. Only at home, having opened the package, he found a large pack of Georgian tea, vanilla crackers and several packs of cookies. The general knew how to maintain the authority of the

organs! The leader would have poured out his anger at once, on whom it was necessary, but then the May offensive of the German troops began on the Don, the Caucasus, Stalingrad. It obscured and pushed back the investigation of the disappearance of the

Smolensk Party Archive to better times. And they came already in the autumn of the forty-third year, when Smolensk was taken. And then on the table of the Supreme Commander lay a certificate, no more than two pages of typewritten text, about the results of the management of the Nazis in Smolensk! Nothing touched him in this document: not the fact that the city was almost con-

for the winter without fuel, water, food supplies, without building materials, with undermined bridges across the Dnieper, mined fields, where the inhabitants of the city were blown up in search of potatoes, nor the looting of a museum with an art gallery, the abduction of an iconostasis from the city cathedral. With a red pencil, he boldly highlighted only one line from the entire text - about the capture

Germans of the party archive and made a note in the margins: "Comrade-~~Shkiryatov~~ [35] - to create a commission, sort it out and report back in a month on the results ... Vol. Beria, Abakumov - to assist in the investigation. His instructions

were fulfilled within the specified time! At the same time, they found guilty! So, part of the blame was placed on General Lukin[36] , who— Not managed to defend Smolensk. Some part of the blame was placed on the commandant of the city, his assistants in the evacuation of property and other small fry from among civilians who did not have time to fight for the East. The commission of the formidable and corrosive Shkiryatov, with the help of the organs of vnudel and Smersh, identified more than twenty people convicted of cowardice and negligence in the performance of their duties. Almost all of them were convicted, and two - General Lukin as a prisoner and assistant commander Bochkarev, who was killed during the bombing - remained unpunished.

Kovalev, having shown resourcefulness and promptness, carried out the order of his chief, using the capabilities of army personnel officers, which helped to identify the surviving officers who could testify on individual episodes of the defense of Smolensk. Only Kovalev, with his legal approach, was able to ensure that not a single officer of their army was among the defendants - they all went through the case as witnesses. Krasovsky then imbued with respect for Kovalev, and they, despite the difference in age, established friendship and mutual understanding.

Chapter XIX. OCCUPATIONS IN THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT AND THE FINAL CHECK

When Bondarev came to Kuzakov to share his opinion about the inspectors and to express resentment against Major Krasovsky, he sat immersed in reading office mail. Alexei Mikhailovich sat down and waited. Having started, interrupting the reading, he said:

- Here, listen, here they sent an order from GlavPU with an extract from Glavlit [\[37\]](#). It is reported that the performance of the song "Dark Night" from the film "Two Soldiers", music by N. Bogoslovsky, words by V. Agatov, is subject to a ban. Now this is a rare occurrence, but, I remember, before the war, a whole list from Glavlit came to our secretariat of a Member of the Military Council. What kind of poets and writers were there! I remembered those whom I read: Babel, Bruno Yasinsky, Pilnyak - and there was an instruction - to withdraw all their books from circulation. And our library fund immediately decreased. Only later did we find out that they were all given the highest measure! Great cleaned up these writers! Many of them were outright Trotskyists, and what money they rowed for their books! And they say that everyone has a car, a dacha! Tell me, Bondarev, what did they lack?! And this intelligentsia always swings, some kind of unstable. Do you remember, Bondarev, how Marx and Lenin spoke about her? Here ... and you say!

Then they switched to current affairs, and Alexei Mikhailovich again complained about Sazonov, about his lack of political experience and party approach. But the indecisive Kuzakov listened to him for a long time, yawned and was silent. He was already tired of listening to the same thing, there were no new facts. And, frankly, Bondarev bored him with his complaints. And, looking away, he said:

- You, Bondarev, although you collected material on Sazonov, but, frankly, yours is weak and unconvincing! The fact that he sent his subordinate to the village to change clothes for lard is not a crime and not even a misdemeanor, because the fact of his personal self-interest is absent, and it is also impossible to prove the theft of military property - any soldier will tell him that it was his personal

property, and it is almost impossible to prove otherwise! Trunk?! - And, putting a serious face on his obsequious face, he paused and continued: - And didn't I punish you to pay attention to his moral and political appearance! I told you: look for the dissatisfied around him. You grabbed one fact, and there should be more ...

Bondarev returned to the department, took a plump volume of executed documents from Kalmykov, began to look for a copy of his request and quite by accident came across a message from the NKVD in the Oryol region about the hanging of an accomplice of the invaders Nikolaev and that his son was serving in their division, and this information was sent for operational use. Bondarev at first did not believe Sazonov's resolution. How could he send such material to the archive?! And why didn't he bring this fact to the attention of the political regiment commander?! After all, hiding this fact from political agencies is an official and political crime! His hands were shaking with excitement, and, rejoicing at his find, he barely managed to overcome his excitement, rewriting the request in his cherished notebook. When Bondarev came out of the dugout, the gray March day seemed to him sheer charm; everything in him rejoiced: at last he had serious material against his boss! I haven't felt this joy in a long time. I simply could not believe that Sazonov could act so recklessly with this message. How he wanted to destroy, trample on Sazonov! How he hated and despised him for his casual way of talking to his subordinates, for his friendly attitude towards everyone in the department, and even for his slightly hoarse tenor! Now Bondarev wanted to share his luck with someone! But this man was only Kuzakov. Although Alexei Mikhailovich was dissatisfied with his indecision, he remained the only one whom he trusted and whom he initiated into his secret affairs. Coming out of the dugout and being in a violently high spirits, Bondarev himself did not

notice how his legs again led him to the chief. How lucky he was that day! Usually Kuzakov has a meeting in the morning, then a meeting, and various party organizers, Komsomol organizers, propagandists or someone from the editorial office of the divisional newspaper go to him - and all with some kind of papers, plans to strengthen, expand, cover political studies, political information for personnel. And suddenly there is no one here! Only one pimply party organizer of the control company, lieutenant

Kartsev, who came to the head of the division on a personal matter. And now, for ten or fifteen minutes, Bondarev sat as if on pins and needles, and from behind the door a voice with the pleading intonation of a visitor could still be heard. But at last this drooling Kartsev rolled out, and Bondarev, sweating with impatience, almost ran into the compartment to Kuzakov. And he, looking at him, said:

- I see, I see, you picked something new, lay it out! And Bondarev, excited with excitement, told about his find. Kuzakov's forehead was covered with wrinkles. It was a sign of his reflections. Then he silently picked up the phone and asked to be connected to the operational department of the division headquarters. Finished the conversation

He said:

- In half an hour, Colonel Lepin leaves for the artillery regiment, and you will call your Tumanov. Remember that you need to speak briefly, no more than fifteen minutes. And yet, do not speak in a tongue twister and do not worry, otherwise he will not understand. Well, and most importantly, do not forget to say that you are fulfilling the duty of a communist without any self-interest, reporting to him about the abuse of your boss and that you regret what happened, but your party duty obliges you to inform the leadership of the fait accompli. When Bondarev picked

up the phone and heard a bass buzzer, and then a click and a voice: "Tumanov is listening," something sank in his chest. He was suddenly overcome with perspiration, and, no longer hearing himself, he announced his position in a loud voice. At this time, an invisible interlocutor managed to tell him: "Don't try to speak loudly, I can hear you perfectly ..." This somehow encouraged Alexei Mikhailovich, and he, in a calmer voice, began to state the essence of his appeal according to a pre-prepared text. The form of the report was short and took about ten minutes. When he finished, the same telephone interlocutor said in a polite but firm voice: "If you have finished, then I will ask you to state all this in a report addressed to me and come with it to me tomorrow at ten o'clock in the morning. I think it's in your best interest not to bring anyone into our conversation. The call will be made to you through the political department of the army. This completed the report. Kuzakov, who was waiting for him near the meeting room, rushed to him:

"Well, how did he take you?!"

- It seems to be nothing. - Come on, tell me! And Bondarev, wanting to appear more respectable in the eyes of the commander, paused and said in a calm tone: "Tomorrow." He invited me to a personal conversation, but

I ask no one about this ... - Well, that's understandable, - Kuzakov remarked, and he had a dawning hope that now he and Bondarev together would really be able to influence the division commander's entourage, neutralize some, for example, this former military specialist Lepin, and establish a good party atmosphere, otherwise the regimental commanders hardly notice him, although he should be the second person in the division. And Kuzakov, with an expression of readiness to serve and do something

- I admire you, you reported cool! He didn't even ask you for any clarifications, you explained it to him so clearly and competently. I respect you for taking my advice to prepare for the conversation. No matter how much advice you give to another, it's of no use! Bondarev straightened up and

barely restrained himself so as not to reproach him for indecision and unwillingness to help him through his connections, but he restrained himself, believing that Kuzakov would be useful to him in the future. In general, they were satisfied with each other, and Bondarev hurried to the department to write a report. About two hours later, the department received a telephone message about the call of the communist Bondarev to the

political department of the N-th army. Meanwhile, Sazonov was preparing for a meeting appointed by Major Kovalev in the department on the state of combating anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda among the personnel of the division. The report on this work was prepared by the inspector, Captain Razin. In order not to take Sazonov by surprise, Kovalev revealed to him the results of the check:

- You understand that Captain Razin collected a lot of facts during the inspection, when your employees did not pay attention to the anti-Soviet preventive work as stated in the statements among the personnel, so take these circumstances into account and try to optimally explain the reasons for the shortcomings ...

During these vain days, Sazonov lost sight of his "beloved" one. And although during the meeting he learned that Bondarev was summoned to the political department of the army, he did not attach any importance to this.

According to Captain Razin, this section of work was launched and the department's employees did not react to anti-Soviet statements, did not take effective measures to suppress especially malicious remarks in relation to our party and Soviet power. So, for example, Sergeant Kulikov, in the circle of his crew, said that they put up poles in their village, hung the wires, but they didn't give electricity, but they only carried out one "breakdown", that is, a radio network. And he said: look under the button on the underpants, and there lice, as at a party meeting, sit together and doze. In addition, private Ukhanov made obscene language at a lecture by the division propagandist on the topic: "National policy of the CPSU (b)". So, to the words of the lecturer "Tsarist Russia was a prison of peoples," he said aloud: "Well, fuck you with a horse!" Then the captain quoted many more statements that undermined the

collective farm system, and read out from the text how Gamayunov, a wagon driver from the regimental economic platoon, said that "it was good to live before the collective farms, when there were [TOZs \[38\]](#) , the village settled down, and then everything became— , only then only a little and common on the collective farm, which means draw! And [MTS\[39\]](#) plows through a stump-deck - no one is responsible for this, and at the end of the year one hundred grams of grain per workday. Another of his interlocutors, soldier Kulevich, who had previously been in the occupied territory and was called up through the field military registration and enlistment office, said: "As soon as we end the war, there should be changes in the countryside.

I'm so smart - they returned the shoulder straps, they will return the [corrals\[40\]](#)." And ordinary Kuraev even sang a ditty of anti-Soviet content:

"Stalin is riding in a carriage, and the carriage is without wheels. Where did you go, Stalin

And not only privates, but also officers make irresponsible statements and sometimes divulge state secrets. Lieutenant-military engineer Zaitsev, in a circle of drinking companions, fully revealed the special event when he participated in an ambush on the former commander of the "Iron Division" Gai [\[41\]](#) , who had fled from arrest, expressing doubts about his — , and at belonging to the enemies of the people!

Then Captain Razin in a cheerful voice read out the conclusion on the results of the check, while noting that in the division oral

anti-Sovietism has become an everyday phenomenon, and counterintelligence pays no attention to enemy statements, does not carry out preventive measures among those who, with hostile intent, allow attacks against the measures of the party and government and slander the Soviet social

system! "And what is the Special Section doing at this time?" the captain asked, breaking away from the text and addressing Sazonov directly. - It turns out that he only observes and registers anti-Soviet! The department does not start developments on such phenomena, the political agencies are

Sazonov understood that, according to the law, Razin was right, but this law was too harsh and cruel! Well, he did not consider many of those whom the inspector wrote down as anti-Soviet as enemies and knew that all of them, when necessary, would meekly give their lives for our power and government, and to use obscene words about the order in the country, collective farm, at the enterprise, small bosses - so this is the first thing for them! There, at home, they were still restrained by fear of the organs, but here, at the front, where death was nearby, they believed that no one would find fault if they spoke aloud about the authorities in a different way than political workers say, glorifying the care of the party and government about the workers. Well, what can you do with them?! And how can you convince them if the slogans and promises of a good life remained words, but the reality was different! And he remembered the arrest of political instructor Volkov in November 1941. If you look at the essence, he did not threaten the Soviet government, but he allowed himself to think aloud about the inconsistency of our pre-war doctrine and criticize the Supreme! However, the law is very strict! Ten years

of camps for Volkov is a lot! Razin finished his critical review and asked if there were any questions for him, but there were none. Then Sazonov, as expected, assured the inspector that the operational staff would take into account all criticisms on this line of work and implement recommendations to eliminate deficiencies ... And many more words of gratitude were said to the inspectors for valuable guidance, advice and assistance in specific cases! This ended the meeting.

Everyone dispersed, satisfied that the meeting had not dragged on and that they would be in time for dinner. And at Sazonov's, an evening of rest for the inspectors was planned and agreed with Kovalev. Let the descendants not think that at the front they did nothing but shoot and commit heroic

exploits. Such an idea of the war could have been created by the newspapers of that time, where there was only: the ability to beat the Fritz; heroism from private to general, sobriety and high culture against the backdrop of devotion to the Motherland! The soldiers and officers depicted in front-line essays did not part with volumes of Mayakovsky's poems or with the book "How the Steel Was Tempered" by N. Ostrovsky, they knew only battles and

battles and drank ... only tea! Spent, filtered by a single stamp GlavPU and Glavlita, newspapers could not show another life about the war!

As his colleague Denisenko advised Sazonov, a bath was needed for the evening of rest. He agreed on this with the commander of the sappers, Major Sobinsky. Their bath was a masterpiece of engineering! A log beauty with a cockerel on a reed roof, with a porch and a canopy, with a railing made of birch poles, in the depths of a spruce forest, she looked like a fabulous house. In the spacious, warm dressing room stood a long iron stove and wide benches with backs. A steam room - look for one like this, you won't find it in the whole division! Specially selected cobblestones and several iron ingots were laid in a cut-off part of a captured pontoon heated from the street. A ladle of water was enough for the steam to cover the entire steam room, made from aspen blocks. From somewhere the soldiers got birch brooms, but juniper brooms were also in use. There was a resinous smell of forest, fresh wood and strawberry soap in the bathhouse. We washed in the bath for a long time.

Three or four visits to the steam room tired the guests. Steamed, tired, but satisfied, they returned to the dugout and, seeing on the table a civilian meal long forgotten in taste, they unanimously expressed their delight. How nice it was to sit at such a table after the bath. Sazonov's orderly brilliantly justified his pre-war position - supply manager. He provided everything for the feast. A long table of ammunition boxes was covered with white paper, and spruce branches lay on the floor and in the corners, emitting a pleasant forest spirit. In the officer's canteen he got plates, forks, glasses, and four lanterns with clean glasses comfortably illuminated the entire compartment. The diluted alcohol stood in a cold thermos. The country gifts received in exchange—cabbages, cucumbers, pickled apples, bacon, and American canned sausage—were chopped up and put on plates. A bucket of boiled potatoes, covered with two blankets, languished, waiting for their turn.

Sazonov modestly listened to the praise. He was unspeakably glad that everything worked out and Yegorov did not disappoint - the table was a success; the check ends without a sign of trouble. Everything is calm in the division, but Bondarev refused a friendly dinner - he has to go to the political department of the army tomorrow.

The first toast, as it has long been customary among army officers, is for the Supreme! And when the thermos was already half empty and a lot of toasts were said: to the beloved Red Army, the officer corps, to the quick Victory, to the health of the checkers and hospitable hosts, and the joy of the first intoxication was not yet lost, when alcohol magically let go of the still young, but decently war-torn nerves, plunging them into serene peace and after-bath bodily lightness, setting them up for good deeds and heartfelt words, then the famous singer and guitarist, foreman Kostya Skipper, appeared at the table with his friend, a domra virtuoso, Misha Kazakov. Sazonov borrowed them from the communications battalion commander for the evening. The divisional commander himself sometimes invited them to his place, listened and sang along when Kostya began the sing-song, but sad "Roar and Stogne" and "I look at the sky."

Silence had already been established at the table, and the foreman took a few chords, and together with the domra they led the pre-war melodies in a duet. Smells and sounds are said to have a special effect on memory. And here, at the front, everything that was connected with peaceful life was especially appreciated! And, listening to these simple melodies, they rested their souls; they were overwhelmed with joy that they were alive, healthy, sitting with alcohol in a warm dugout, the Germans were not bombing, not shelling ... And the music, painfully familiar from dance floors and films, arranged for them a joyful meeting with the past. The war had been going on for four years, and they had already forgotten the faces of their relatives and loved ones, and the song words stirred up their memory. And, fascinated by melodies and words, they rejoiced and grieved about the passing of youth, the loss of the front during this long war. The thermos with alcohol was already

empty and tea was drunk from two teapots. Time was running towards midnight. The repertoire of the film actor Mark Bernes, who was just coming into fashion, was performed twice as an encore, and the sternly sincere "Dark Night" each time made the eyes of almost every one of them sparkle with a tear. But, to each his own. And Bondarev, leaving the neighboring dugout, saw another sin

Sazonov - the performance of a song banned by the GlavPU in the location of the dugout, about which he will certainly report tomorrow to Tumanov.

Chapter XX. UNSUCCESSFUL DENUM

In the morning, having had a hasty breakfast, Bondarev, excited by the upcoming meeting, got into the gig and plunged into thoughts. Now he had no doubt that his efforts would not be in vain. Why else did Tumanov summon him then?! Probably, from that telephone report, the colonel understood that he was dealing not just with a slanderer, but with a former regional-scale co-worker who had an internship in the political agencies of the Supreme Commander's Headquarters and nominated to strengthen the Special Department. And if he does not know this, then Alexei Mikhailovich will remind him of this. Despite the fact that the road went through a dense spruce forest and the gig was thrown from side to side over the roots, he, not paying attention to this, continued to mentally strengthen his position in front of the formidable colonel and make estimates about how he would perceive him and what conclusion he would draw. Bondarev no longer doubted that Sazonov would be removed from the department due to the totality of facts of behavior unworthy of a leader and a communist! But what good will it do him personally if Tumanov appoints a new chief, and he remains the deputy?! So, all his

efforts and efforts will be in vain?! From such thoughts he felt hot, he unbuttoned his sheepskin coat, and the morning chill of early spring refreshed him. And he returned to these thoughts again and again. But how to make the colonel choose him?! Even with Kuzakov, he would not consult on such a delicate issue. Now he himself must make such a move so that Tumanov pays attention to him.

A similar story came to mind that happened to him when he was promoted. Then he worked in the capital construction department of the regional executive committee. Not without pleasure, he recalled the fight between the two giants of the region - the secretary of the regional committee, Nikitin, and the executive committee, Maximov. The dispute between them arose because of the construction of the road. Maximov knocked out a decent amount of money in Moscow for the construction of the only road to the district center, where there was a defense plant of allied significance. The secretary of the regional party committee was not against the construction, but he wanted the road to pass by his country hou

without swallowing the dust of a dirt road, he could be in a car, with a breeze, in a quarter of an hour to be in his cozy house, by the way, requisitioned by his predecessors from the local wealthy Dorofeev. But the munitions factory was in a different direction, and Nikitin desired to travel along a good road, and he thought of removing this obstacle by peaceful means. First, he offered to make a small detour so that the road would run past his residence, and then further, where necessary! But the project, developed at a closed institute and approved in Moscow, did not provide for extra kilometers. The secretary was persistent and waged a real war against the regional executive committee. The capital construction department was called in full force to the regional party committee, where the task was set - to find flaws in the project. They searched for shortcomings for a long time and almost despaired, when suddenly Alexei Mikhailovich discovered in him the absence of a visa for the chief inspector of the military department for capital construction. He managed to get an appointment with Novikov, explained everything and was awarded a strong secretarial handshake, and a few days later the project was withdrawn, and the regional committee began to hastily prepare a plenum on errors in capital construction in the region. And, of course, Maximov was removed. Many regretted this and said that he was a technically literate man, he understood the drawings and estimates. But the secretary of the regional committee was not strong even in reading and writing. He came from a family of hereditary shepherds, but he says that he skillfully managed the herd and the community was pleased with him, and then he left the trenches for the revolution and became, as he said, a party professional! As soon as Maximov was relieved of his post, his successor, who understood less about construction, but was more accommodating, managed to build a road to the house of the secretary of the regional committee, and Bondarev was appointed head of the sector for the protection of state secrets. He was then very proud that he managed to find a clue and the

project was wrapped up, and believed that he had received the position on merit, otherwise he would have vegetated in capital construction. And now he, too, must make a breakthrough and ensure that Tumanov evaluates him as a politically mature, principled communist, on whom he can always rely on at the right time! He was again building up the chain of facts he had gathered against his boss. It seemed to him that they were more than enou

to make his contribution ... Pictures, one more gratifying than the other, he saw: how Sazonov babbles something in his defense, and he is forced to admit his mistakes and miscalculations, and he sits pale, with his head bowed! However, no condescension and discounts for him, although he has been in the division since the beginning of the war: he retreated and advanced with it, and two wounds ... So many communists have much more merit, let them not boast of it! At this, Bondarev finished presenting pictures of the destruction of his boss, believing that it was all over with him. "But what should Tumanov say about himself, how to arouse and strengthen his trust and sympathy?! Why don't I do as it was then with the secretary of the regional committee - right on the forehead and say, so, they say, and so, count on me, Comrade Colonel, at any time, if something happens, I can always do for you all not sparing strength and, if necessary, life! And in which case I will always inform you about everything! What should Tumanov do and where to go from such words, eh?! Drive away ... But, I hope he is a well-mannered person, he will not allow himself this ... And my words that he is so smart and enjoys tremendous authority in all parts of the army will not cause displeasure in him, he will not object. And the fact that I praise him a little, because no one has died from this yet! And, perhaps, after such words, he will understand, imbue me and appoint me to the department? From such an outcome of the case, Bondarev was breathtaking and joy filled his whole being. And then it seemed to him that today's

sunny day was at one with him! The headquarters of the N-th army was located in a small, extremely well-preserved town. It was rumored that at the end of the autumn of forty-three, the Western Front, gathering the last efforts for the offensive, received an order from the Headquarters to go over to the defensive. Then the last operation to liberate Senezh was prepared. The enemy, snarling with artillery fire and six-barreled mortars, in a hurry, fearing encirclement, withdrew to pre-prepared lines two dozen kilometers away. Unlike those settlements that had previously been encountered in the division's offensive zone, where silent chimneys mostly stuck out, Senezh looked comfortable, despite the huge camouflage nets over the houses of the main street. In some places near the houses, leaning against the fences, stood short American jeeps - "jeeps". Rushed into

eyes are pointers on plywood, boards from shell boxes with the inscriptions "Lunkov's economy" and many others known only to officers from the army headquarters. For the first time in many months, Bondarev also saw women in uniform. Two girls walked towards him in overcoats neatly fitted and stitched at the waist, in boots, sparkling with the knees of slender legs, talking to each other and not paying attention to the inviting glances of the oncoming men.

The house of the army "Smersh" was distinguished by its quality factor, a good fence and two sentries at the gate. The head of the guard, a sergeant in a new overcoat, came out and, briefly looking at the certificate, said that the gig would be waiting for Bondarev in the household platoon. Opening the gate, he escorted him into the office, where an elderly sergeant with a bald head was sitting and, not paying attention to those who came in, quickly tapped on a typewriter. The sergeant offered to undress, and Bondarev hid his sheepskin coat in a large closet; sat down, opened the tablet

and pulled out his cherished notebook. Colonel Yevgeny Ivanovich Tumanov, in a good woolen tunic and creaking harness, looked youthful for his fifty. He was sitting at a table covered with green cloth, immersed in some papers. He got the table from the Germans. Judging by the papers left behind, Wehrmacht supplies were stationed here. A careful examination of the premises, in case of mining, on the leg of the table, an inventory metal tag was found, clearly indicating that the handsome oak table belonged to the Smolensk city farm. "Such hoarders," Tumanov thought of the Germans then, "they brought them from Smolensk, they were not too lazy. Me too, admirers of beauty and comfort!.." During the reading, his thoughts returned to yesterday's call on

HF from the Center of his old friend Perfiliev. According to his hints, Yevgeny Ivanovich realized that a replacement of the front commander and a member of the Military Council was expected soon. This has been discussed here for a long time, rumors about their mutual hostility have long been the subject of discussion among the drivers of the headquarters auto company. By the way, they were always the first to be aware of the internal relations of the front leadership. The front commander - General Sokolovsky [42]

entourage, was a decisive and powerful person and — , how knew him unity of command

understood without a trace in his favor. A member of the Military Council, General Mekhlis, was morbidly proud, sought to exceed his authority by interfering in the command of front units.

Tumanov remembered his first acquaintance with Mekhlis, when he arrived at the headquarters of the Western Front, gathered on the very first day the entire top of the political workers of the four armies and the heads of the Special Departments and, without giving a word to anyone, he himself spoke for two hours about strengthening the political leadership of the front, spoke about the softness of the former General Bulganin, a member of the Military Council, and demanded from the special officers close cooperation with political agencies, recognition of their seniority and increased political control over the army leadership.

Mekhlis, small in stature, black-haired, with gray hair at the temples, threw thunder and lightning at the entire command staff of the front, accusing everyone of lack of firmness in achieving their goals, slowness and, most importantly, underestimating party political work and belittling the role of political agencies. There was another meeting with

Mekhlis, when there was a fight between the infantry and the Bashkir cavalry over the division of the captured trophies. Then he immediately convened all the chiefs of the Special Departments of the armies and gave them a lecture on internationalism and the indestructible friendship of peoples. Everyone understood that the scuffle between the shooters and the cavalry took place because of the junk thrown by the Germans. But Mekhlis saw this as a national conflict and reproached the Specialists for not carrying out preventive work to reveal the facts of chauvinism in the units. No one objected to him, but everyone understood that he wanted to show his will and influence on the counterintelligence agencies in order to create a legend about his power. According to intelligence information from the special officers, the officer corps was on the side of the front. Everyone knew about his command and staff experience in the army from the very beginning of the war. The headquarters of his front was the embodiment of accuracy and order. And the headquarters of the units were replenished with officers capable of staff work, and this was the merit of General Sokolovsky. As for Mekhlis, then, as the poet said, "... there was love without joy, separation will be without sadness," he went too far and cared about the authority of political agencies. And, of course, he loved to be praised, but he could not stand coarse flattery, and

now, if someone hinted to him about his large-scale understanding of Marxism, and even better, if the Institute of Red Professors was mentioned, where he consolidated his political education, then, as the witnesses of these conversations said, he could not be stopped - he could spend hours with tears in his eyes talk about the forge of intellectual party

cadres ... The foreman who entered interrupted Tumanov's thoughts about the fate of the leaders of the front and reported on the arrival of Bondarev. Yevgeny Ivanovich took out the notes he had made during a telephone conversation with Bondarev and sat for several minutes in thought. He sacredly observed the rule - to make decisions only when exhaustive information has already been collected! He did not allow hasty conclusions: he did everything thoroughly and weightily. He established such a tradition for his subordinates, and therefore was known among them as demanding, but fair. He well remembered how, a few months ago, he himself signed a report on the nomination of Sazonov to the post of head of the department to replace the murdered Major Guskov. Then the personnel officers from the front department wanted to slip their half-drunk personnel officer into this position, but Tumanov, without expressing dissatisfaction aloud to them, quickly wrote a report on filling the vacancy and approved it directly from the head of the department. And now he had to consider an official charge against his nominee and decide his fate! Right there, on his desk, lay a certificate on the personal file of Major Bondarev. Everything was smooth in it: I was not offended by the letter - secondary technical education, track record without remarks, politically savvy, morally stable, in the army since March forty-two, called up for party

mobilization. Bondarev entered and, having announced his arrival, handed the report to Yevgeny Ivanovich. While he was reading it, Alexei Mikhailovich was sitting at the side table, examining the green cloth of the large table, anxiously waiting for the colonel's reaction. Tumanov, having read to the end, invited Bondarev to tell in more detail on all points of what exactly he accuses Sazonov of. And he suggested starting with the fact that his boss criminally dragged out the check of a trained reconnaissance group. And, reassured by the attentively interested and even encouraging look of the interlocutor, Bondarev completely came to his senses and with great animation, without hesitation, explained

without forgetting to mention his merits in fulfilling the combat order of the Center.

When he began to describe in unnecessary detail the technique of checking each candidate, Tumanov stopped him and began to ask questions about the basic requirements laid down in the orders of the Center for checking persons involved in cooperation with military counterintelligence. This was Alexei Mikhailovich's weak point, and from the very first words it became clear to the colonel that Bondarev did not know the simplest basics of special police work. How could the personnel officers send him to the department without training and why he agreed to take this position without completing an internship, Tumanov was indignant to himself. He was surprised by the arrogance and aplomb of the major. From his explanations, it could be concluded that he was the only one in the department, as a former political worker, who could correctly assess the comprehensive significance of the facts and give them a correct interpretation based on his experience in political department work. And his often repeated phrases "trust me as a former political worker", "my political experience tells me ..." caused Tumanov slight irritation and antipathy towards his interlocutor. And then, in a calm tone, but strictly and adamantly, he rejected the first paragraph of the report on bureaucracy and reinsurance of his boss, pointing out to Alexei Mikhailovich his poor knowledge of orders, and forced him to agree that

he was wrong in his accusation. The first failure discouraged Bondarev, and he sank a little, but he hoped for two more significant facts remaining in reserve, where Sazonov is accused of squandering military property, decomposing personnel, and also of hiding information from political agencies about the execution of a German accomplice, who turned out to be the father of a military division officer. Thus, Sazonov not only abused his official position, but also committed an official and political crime! This is how Bondarev strictly assessed the mistakes in the activities of his boss and believed, by the old, pre-war standards, that he deserves not only removal from office, but also consideration of the case in a military tribunal!

This opinion he expressed to the colonel. So, gradually, step by step, Tumanov began to understand the main motive of Bondarev, which forced him to apply with a report, from where it was

it is clear that the major recorded all the activities of his boss for many days purposefully: to collect compromising evidence so that the boss was removed from his post. And, in order to be convinced of the correctness of his assumption, the colonel, without interrupting, listened for a long time to Bondarev about the seriousness of Sazonov's misdeeds and their political consequences, about which he spoke almost in a whisper, with aspiration, thereby wanting to arouse the listener's responsibility for the facts presented. Tumanov, when it was his turn to speak, asked if a serviceman could have a spare pair

of uniforms or shoes and if he had the right to dispose of them, and Bondarev was forced to answer in the affirmative. "Well, then," the colonel continued, "we will consider that the issue of squandering property and, as you indicated in the report, its undesirable political consequences,

is being removed," and he looked very sternly at the major - he was already uncomfortable! However, there was still a glimmer of hope that Tumanov most likely left to the last the most serious offense of his boss - the concealment from the political agencies of the materials received regarding Captain Nikolaev. It seemed to Bondarev that, discussing this fact, the colonel would drop his strictness, get up from the table, shake his hand and express his gratitude for the party's adherence to principles and high vigilance. After all, this is not a joke - to hide such material from everyone! And who could afford to do that?! It turns out that the head of the Special Department himself! But such a benevolent picture Bondarev did not

waited.

Tumanov looked at his watch, casually, as it seemed to Alexei Mikhailovich, took a report from the table and with a stern face, looking straight into his eyes, began to reprimand him for the fact that this report was the result of general idleness in their department, and checking the work of employees shows that that many simply retired from work and education personnel.

Instead of doing business, collect material on your boss, spending your office time on this! Then, with a sneer, he noted that the collected facts were not worth a damn and that such issues should have been resolved in his department - in working order! And on these trifles the major spends the time he could

to use to strengthen the combat readiness of the division, as well as the time of the colonel himself, who is responsible for the entire N-th army! It followed from the irritable tirade that Bondarev, although he had political experience, did not quite correctly assess the actions of his boss, and the facts he collected did not deserve consideration in the Smersh army department. Like many senior officers, Tumanov liked to scold his subordinates,

meeting with him was never a holiday for them. Remembering the old proverb "The first whip to a whistleblower", he decided to deal with the major so that he ordered himself and his friends to collect dirt on his boss. In his passionate denunciation, the divisional department was already called a group of unprincipled loafers who started a squabble among themselves, and Sazonov shows sloppiness, not demanding a report from each employee for every hour of work, and that this happens in the conditions of the struggle against the Nazi invaders, when everyone must give everything their forces to defeat the enemy, and not engage in empty business. And he pointed to the report in front of him.

Bondarev was so confused under the angry pressure of reproaches that he could not even insert a word into the colonel's accusatory speech, he sat red with excitement and could not understand what had happened to Tumanov. Indeed, at the beginning of the conversation, he listened to him so attentively, without interrupting, without making comments, and suddenly everything turned against him. He tried to clarify that there were also facts that he had not yet stated, but the colonel, slapping his palm on the table, said:

"All right, Major. Sazonov will give me a written explanation of them. And as for your report that your boss and a group of inspectors listened to the forbidden song "Dark Night", those singers simply were not notified of the ban. And they didn't know about it. This ended the conversation. Bondarev,

dejected by her result, went out into the yard. It was the first real day of spring: with sun, warmth, blue skies, the chirping of sparrows; but all this is no longer for him. He got into the gig and wanted one thing - to find himself as soon as possible in his dugout - the only refuge for him; by no means understood and insulted in his best intentions - the suppression of all violations and abuses in the service! And Bondarev himself believed that he had come here only for this purpose and had completely forgotten about his

bright dreams - to be the head of the department! It was a pity that Tumanov did not even offer him a glass of tea; everything in my mouth was dry, I wanted to drink and eat! And he no longer saw the beauties of the spring day, did not notice the way back, but thought only of his defeat. Accustomed to those civil, pre-war measures of guilt, when they in the regional committee could accept any anonymous letter on an objectionable employee, consider it and decide on punishment, Bondarev was sincerely outraged that Tumanov, having such facts about Sazonov's service activities, not only took them into account, but accused the entire department and him personally of idleness. He laid all the blame for his failure on the colonel: he did not appreciate his party duty, did not listen to the facts presented and did not give them a proper principled assessment. And he already intended to apply to the Smersh front department with an appeal against his report, but changed his mind, remembering Kuzakov's words about the solidarity of the special officers. Therefore, Tumanov tried to protect the honor of his uniform and not to wash dirty linen in public - this is how he explained to himself the reason

for his unsuccessful sortie with a report. By the time we returned, the sun was already on the horizon. The dinner brought by the orderly was a little warm, but Bondarev, not noticing this, ate it with gusto and, without remorse, fell asleep for his unsuccessful falsehood.

Chapter XXI. TUMANOV'S FEARS

When Bondarev had just left Senezh, Tumanov was already calling his favorite Kovalev: to ask how the check was going, and then talked with him for a long time.

Frankly, the colonel was afraid of informers. He had his own bitter experience in this part. And this happened two years ago, after the first German strike was withdrawn from Moscow, when the Western Front drove them out at the cost of great efforts. At that time, a group of employees from the Center came to his department with a top-secret assignment. Specialists of the active army then knew little about the newly created 4th Directorate in the NKVD - the main headquarters of sabotage and terror in the fight against Nazi Germany. All his activities were surrounded by deep secrecy behind seven seals: the mention of him in telephone conversations and in correspondence was strictly prohibited. The arrival of a group of officers from Moscow was covered up with a legend connected with the

exposure of the Abwehr agents. By their arrival, in two days, sappers built a powerful dugout with an overlap of three rolls, and a platoon of submachine gunners was put up for protection. If Tumanov had the opportunity to look into the confidential correspondence of the secretariat of the NKVD, then the reasons for the emergence of the plan and the ultimate goal of the secret mission of the visiting group of "centralists" would be revealed to him. It was here, in correspondence, that the first message of our radio counterintelligence was sent about the appearance of a powerful radio propaganda center in Warsaw among the Germans. At first, the Central Committee of the party did not attach any importance to this message, believing that fascist propaganda was rude and clumsy for the Soviet people, and besides, our population had nothing to listen to the radio - the radios were confiscated at the very beginning of the war! It remains unknown how the pre-revolutionary Kharkov actor Blumenthal-Tamarin, the son of the people's artist Blumenthal Tamarina, who played in the Moscow Art Theater, got to the Warsaw Center.

Having entered the service of the Germans, he became a master of anti-Soviet propaganda: he created a cycle of game programs about Politburo meetings.

The author of all sorts of dialogues, a reprise, he himself, imitating the voice of the Father of Nations, uttered monologues, gave remarks in conversations with his imaginary Kremlin associates. And he very convincingly portrayed His sincerity and wisdom in conversations with the "workers", "peasants", "intelligentsia", the leaders of the Red Army, the NKVD bodies and with former party comrades from the Trotskyist-

Zinoviev bloc. Several times the Supreme Commander himself in his office tuned his luxurious Telefunken to Warsaw and through the crackle of atmospheric discharges he listened to his own voice - more clear and improved by the skill of a professional artist, but with a characteristic Georgian accent and incorrect, unique speech accents. But instead of an open, loud praising of His genius, statesmanship and the affirmation of the people's love for Him, there was a poisonous parody, enhanced by the similarity of the intonation of his voice. He listened in silence - nothing betrayed his excitement, if not for his fingers, furiously breaking cigarettes for a pipe. Everything boiled in him with rage, but the one who broadcast and mocked him for the amusement of the whole world is now in Warsaw and out of reach for Him, and this infuriated even more! He experienced the same thing, reading poisonous philippics at night addressed to him from a former comrade-in-arms, and then a competitor in the struggle for power, who settled in Mexico. But after all, our people got to him. Fulfilled their duty to the Motherland! And what prevents them from getting to Warsaw now?! And with a firm hand, He immediately made notes in the workbook. And each time, with a red pencil, he wrote short resolutions on the radio interception materials: "Comrade. Beria L.P. - take measures to silence this dirty trick, study the possibilities of eliminating the radio center ... "

Many of the top of the NKVD turned white with fear and anger, reading biting and not devoid of artistic imagination texts under the "leader". And only at the end of the forty-first year, with great difficulty, they found a distant relative of the Warsaw parodist. Despite the fact that he was a white-ticketer, he was "conscripted into the army", where he took a course in a safe house and was prepared to be thrown in a very risky way across the front line. The life of the white-ticker "N" was at stake: the legend provided for his capture during the hostilities; but he

was "inspired" and processed in such a way that even without pressure, he voluntarily agreed to carry out the task of the omnipotent organs!

At first, the Muscovites who came to the front, according to instructions born in the silence of the office, kept their task so secret that none of them could take a step on their own! Their entire team was sitting in the dugout, as if chained, not letting anyone even on the threshold! They crawled out only at sunset, when night fell - this was how the secrecy of the mission and, most importantly, the identity of the one on whom the high stakes were placed in Moscow were protected! He, dressed in shabby soldier's uniform, went out at dusk accompanied by them and silently "walked" among the posted posts, preparing himself for the inevitable. Beria's own confidant was placed at the head of the visiting tsentroviks; Colonel Lomidze. There was no doubt that he was diligent and loyal to his boss in a Caucasian way. But the instructions received in Moscow completely fettered his activities. Lomidze himself - a stately, powerful Georgian - for the first time performed such a responsible task. Prior to that, he worked as a supplier in the NKVD of Transcaucasia, then in Moscow for the same part. And suddenly Lavrenty himself called him and sent him to that very formidable department where saboteurs and terrorists were trained, to carry out, as he was told, a special KGB assignment. Tall, with an open masculine face and a brush of mustache, in harness belts, in a long cavalry overcoat, with a wooden Mauser box, he is, as it were, an example of courage and heroism! But looks are often deceiving; Lomidze was a coward and was terribly afraid of everything connected with the front: shots, bombing, shelling, but skillfully disguised his fear. And all the precautions allegedly related to their task, Lomidze carried out mainly for his own safety. Tumanov was convinced of this when they were driving round the junction of two divisions

one afternoon and came under mortar fire. Lomidze, pale with fear, fought in hysterics, swearing and poking the driver in the face with his fist, shouting something in Georgian ... Colonel Tumanov had to see this for the first time. Although the handsome Georgian was afraid of not only this! He was afraid of the responsibility for the assigned task that had fallen on him, was unsure of his actions, did not trust anyone, and, not knowing the intricacies of service in the advanced units, demanded

checks, in addition to staff officers, also platoons, whose soldiers will guard. The days went by.

The Germans made counterattacks in some places, which was a convenient moment for the transfer of object "N" to the enemy; but Lomidze hesitated and hesitated. All this exhausted Tumanov to the limit and at the report in the front department he begged to help him, to push Lomidze to activity. Those who needed to call the Center and from there gave a thrashing to Lomidze, and the next day he shouted at Tumanov that he would not allow his group to be accused of indecision and would not allow him to be defamed, sent by Lavrenty Pavlovich himself! And it really was so - the far-sighted chief chose Lomidze to his advantage. If the task is completed, this will once again show that the People's Commissar is omnipresent and, despite being busy, controls the operation through his person. And just in case, if something goes wrong and you have to show the owner the culprit, he will see such a representative countryman; sometimes he liked beautiful people.

Military officers also took part in the operation to bring object "N" to the enemy, as the relative of Blumenthal-Tamarin was called in the documents. Tumanov himself worked with them, and even the special officer of the regiment, in whose sector the withdrawal of the battalion, which had unfavorably penetrated the German defenses, was planned.

Colonel Tumanov, smeared with clay, was returning from the front line. In his tablet he had a schematically depicted section of the battalion with the names of the responsible officers. Lomidze took away the scheme of the site from Tumanov and tried to force him to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Evgeny Ivanovich refused and wanted to prove the absurdity of such a requirement in a good way. But the touchy Georgian remembered this skirmish.

Upon completion of the assignment, at a friendly dinner, Lomidze intercepted the excess. And he dropped a notebook with rough notes on the operation with the object "N". In the morning, Tumanov already had the notebook, and when the group left, he handed it to Lomidze. He hypocritically hugged Tumanov, saying that he would not forget his nobility. And, indeed, did not forget!

Upon returning to Moscow, being sure that Tumanov would not miss the opportunity to report to the leadership about the notebook, he immediately wrote a report where he accused his recent assistant of violating the conspiracy;

a sophisticated move of a slanderer-informer! Several times Yevgeny Ivanovich had to write explanatory notes to his superiors and prove his case. Well, the object "N", when

the combat guards "accidentally left" him alone in the trench, saw German soldiers coming towards him and raised his hands. And then there was a camp for prisoners of war and several months of being in this hell; he endured everything. Even there, in a safe house, he was told about the possible thorns and dangers on his way, but he was sure that his mentors had calculated his entire route to the smallest detail, and this gave him hope and perseverance. And, according to legend, he made himself known by a postcard to the recognized film star of the Reich, the magnificent Olga Chekhova[43]. Russian actors have always been especially solidary with each other when misfortune happened to any of them! She responded, charming and irresistible, came to the camp. Then a dinner was given, where she conveyed her innocent request for POW "N". The next day, he, transformed, in an expensive suit and leather Swiss raglan, looked quite respectable and left this vale of suffering.

Somewhere in the distant archives to this day lie his messages about the successful introduction into the Warsaw radio center and the task given to him by a liaison from the Polish underground about the elimination of the parodist artist. The rest was a matter of technique. Object "N" was an intelligent person and could not immediately decide to carry out the order of the Center. He hesitated, because the former artist recognized him as a relative, warmed him up, arranged him in a sound studio, took care of him. In the hustle and bustle of the German retreat from Warsaw, somewhere along the road to Germany, Blumenthal-Tamarin was quietly liquidated by the Polish underground. But Tumanov learns about this much later, when he is unexpectedly awarded for participating in the implementation of an "important" government task. The boss himself was not bypassed with the award, and his gallant Colonel Lomidze, who received the Order of Lenin for his heroic participation in this matter. Tumanov did not even resent such an injustice that this coward received the highest government award! There were many injustices in the existing reward system. And he knew well that the apparatus of

worked out his own style of filling out award lists and got off in them with common stenciled, flowery phrases: "showed courage", "behaved heroically", "thanks to high skill and perseverance", "inspired his subordinates by his example". These phrases masked sometimes not at all heroic deeds. Obeying the instructions of the authorities, sycophants, sticky and other obsequious types were presented for awards, of which there were a lot of them both at the front and in the rear! Our descendants are unlikely to recognize from the victorious reports lying in the archive those who, along with real heroes, were awarded undeservedly. And the order will equally adorn both genuine and imaginary ones, but, as the saying of that time said, "the war will write everything off." And sometimes, indeed, copied a lot.

Chapter XXII. END OF INTRIGUATION AND OPINION ABOUT DEPORTATION

Waking up, Bondarev remembered yesterday's conversation with Tumanov, and the bitterness of resentment seized him, his mood deteriorated. Sluggishly dressing, he mentally asked himself whether it was worth going now to Kuzakov and what to tell him about the results of the trip. But, it seems, the head of the department had hopes for a better outcome. Irritation grew, and when, by the remnants of soap suds, he discovered that someone had used his shaving brush, he called the orderly, and, remembering all the past blunders in servicing his person, began to read him a long and tedious notation, without swearing, but with the use words: "stupid head", "mediocrity, memoryless", "silent as an idol" and other expressions that he inherited from his mother.

The orderly was much older than Alexei Mikhailovich; slightly stooped, with a mournful face, he silently listened to the major, looking at his feet. He was used to this kind of treatment. He was often reprimanded like that at home, in civilian life: first by his father, then by the authorities at the post office, where he served as a groom. He took listening to abuse in his address as a vital necessity. And looking at how the major inflamed himself over trifles, he whispered to himself: "Lord, bring the storm and forgive him, the servant of God! .."

Letting off steam and slightly improving his mood, Alexei Mikhailovich shaved and washed himself. The guilty orderly, smiling guiltily, brought concentrated rice porridge in a pot, put the remains of the officer's extra ration on the table: butter, biscuits - and quietly closed the door behind him. Bondarev liked to sit alone and slowly, not

hurry to eat.

At sunrise, the enemy began shelling the rear roads. Shells, somewhere at a high altitude, ripped open the spring air, and from there, from a height, came a sound, like during a thunderstorm, similar to the crack of torn material. Then the intermittent hooting ceased, and from afar, from where the shell had fallen, came the muffled sound of an explosion. Bondarev stood on the threshold of the dugout, and the orderly behind him said:

freezes and our rear, until it becomes limp, they bring ammunition and provisions closer to the positions. Here he is hammering! No wonder these days the "frame" often visited - when it was cloudy, she did not fly, but as soon as she could see, she began to buzz - to look out. Here is their artillery of large caliber and thumps on us.

A messenger approached and called Alexei Mikhailovich to the inspector, Major Kovalev. Entering the far compartment of the dugout, Bondarev saw Sazonov and two inspectors sitting with gloomy faces that did not promise anything good. Major Kovalev began by saying that, on behalf of Colonel Tumanov, he must conduct an internal investigation and find out where and under what circumstances Bondarev got acquainted with the secret materials received from the GlavPU. Aleksey Mikhailovich did not immediately guess that this was the document shown to him by the head of division Kuzakov. And, of course, he did not recognize Tumanov's clever move - to punish two people at once: Bondarev and the one who acquainted him with the documents.

Kovalev conducted the survey quickly and aggressively. Having specified under what circumstances Bondarev got acquainted with the secret document, he called Major Kuzakov through the duty officer. When he entered and saw two majors unknown to him and Bondarev sitting in front of them, he suddenly felt danger with all his being. Many times he had to see his colleagues at the headquarters of the district after such conversations, when they tore off their insignia and took them away, stunned and confused with fear, accompanied by an armed convoy! Yes, how could one forget the horror that was born from one look at those who were already doomed, and the joy that it was not you on the chopping block! He no longer remembered whether he then felt sorry for the doomed, but the mortal fear that he could be among them, and the relief that this fate had passed him like a flying stray bullet, he remembered forever. And when these

two, who looked very courteous and cultured, introduced themselves to Kuzakov as employees of the Special Department of the Army and said that they were forced to invite him to a conversation, his legs buckled and something sank in his chest. The major, who was younger, politely but persistently asked questions, and Kuzakov, consumed by fear, not thinking of hiding anything, without hiding, told in detail how he introduced Bondarev to the Glavpurov document, but now

realizes he made a mistake. And Major Kovalev immediately laid out his main accusatory trump card: on what basis did the chief officer assist Major Bondarev in using special communications and did he know for what purpose he was turning to Colonel Tumanov? Kuzakov looked sadly at Bondarev with annoyance and said nothing. Kovalev, without giving time for reflection, threatened that if the commander did not want to talk about it here, this would be reported to the Member of the Military Council of the Army. This broke Kuzakov, and, falling to his knees, he began to beg not to inform the general of his unfortunate oversight. And then, with heartfelt frankness, he accused Bondarev of deceiving him and taking advantage of his gullibility. Alexei Mikhailovich, in turn, did not remain in debt: he frankly laid out that all the facts about Sazonov were discussed by him and Kuzakov and that he not only completely agreed, but even approved and advised to report to Tumanov. Kuzakov began to object, and Bondarev, inflamed with anger and feeling that he had nothing to lose, laid out everything he knew about the boss. The skirmish could have turned into a brawl, but Kovalev, using the right of an interrogating officer, severely scolded Bondarev, pointing out to him the inadmissibility of collecting compromising evidence on his own boss. Strongly got and Kuzakov. Kovalev, with legal justification, laid out Kuzakov's guilt of aiding and slandering the officer - the head of the "Smersh" division and also noted that it was he, as the leader of the division's political agencies, who had to convince and stop Bondarev in preparing unreasonable actions! Despising each other, they sat in silence, while Kovalev, in accordance with all the rules, arranged a flogging for them - yesterday's comrades according to an unfulfilled plan! They left the dugout, cursing in their hearts the day and hour when they met and entered into an alliance with dubious goals!

A few days after the departure of the inspectors, the long-awaited order was received to award Sazonov the rank of major. This event was noted as it should be. Many congratulated: Colonel Lepin presented shoulder straps embroidered with gold; Bondarev also congratulated, but then casually noticed that he had been awarded the rank of major for almost a year. back.

After the story of the denunciation, when he was subjected to execution in a narrow circle, among his special officers, Bondarev avoided everyone and, coming to report to Dmitry Vasilyevich, avoided looking into his eyes. Although he generously forgave him and spoke to him without any partiality, as if nothing had happened. But Chief of Staff Lepin, having learned what a scolding was arranged for the two majors, laughed and quoted an excerpt from Krylov's fable - about the inconstancy of the friendship of two

watchdogs. With the spring warmth of the March days, news came to the Western Front from Moscow about the eviction of Chechens, Ingush, Circassians, Balkars, Kalmyks from their territory. It was said that these peoples did not justify the trust of the party and the

government, and therefore they were deported to Kazakhstan. All the heads of the Special Departments were unexpectedly summoned to the Smersh Front Office. At the meeting, in deathly silence, a closed Decree of the Supreme Council was read, which spoke of the liquidation of autonomies and the eviction of the indigenous peoples inhabiting them. The general sent by Abakumov announced the order on Smersh, where the Special Departments were instructed to identify military personnel and civilians of the corresponding nationalities in military units within ten days and escort them to the place of assembly to be sent to the places of expulsion of their compatriots. Lieutenant Colonel Kruzhilin, a well-

known joker and wit among the Specialists, asked: "Comrade General, before the war I served in the North Caucasian District. I wonder how it was possible

to evict the highlanders - there are hard-to-reach places there ?!

The Moscow general, showing off, made a long pause and with a sense of special importance began to tell that this unique operational military operation was being prepared in strict secrecy. It was attended by border, internal troops and the operational staff of the NKVD and the Special Departments. This action was directly led by Generals Serov and Kobulov, well-known in the NKVD. The general management of its preparation and conduct was carried out by People's Commissar Beria. Then the general in a joyful voice announced how many cars and wagons were prepared for the removal of people. And he also enthusiastically told w

evictions. Thus, the arrival of troops in Chechnya and Ingushetia was "legendary" under the maneuvers of the North Caucasus Military District. For this, military units were quartered even in distant villages. Everywhere they set up and corrected the radio broadcasting in the regional centers and prepared the texts of the appeal to the population in local languages, outlined the announcers from among the Party Komsomol composition. Men and teenagers, in order to be immediately escorted from one place, it was decided to gather in local clubs for solemn meetings in connection with the anniversary of the Red Army. The listed eviction measures, as the general said, prepared in a short time and carefully planned, made it possible to complete the difficult task set by the party and the government without firing a shot, which highly appreciated the operational skill

participants in the operation and presented them for —

awards[44]. The head of the Special Department of the cavalry brigade turned to the Moscow general. He asked what he should do if he has a deputy. brigade commander in the rear, Ingush lieutenant colonel, who has five orders, three of them - of the Red Banner! The general, before he could finish his flattering characterization of the officer, puffed himself up and in an impassive tone, as if it were a question of a horse that needed to be written off due to

old age, said: "The order must be carried out unconditionally, without any exceptions for the title and awards ...

If the general knew that the Ingush Alikhanov, as a young man, served in his uncle's German cavalry division, then went over to the Reds, dangled along all fronts of the civil war, commanded a squadron, a regiment and ended the war in Turkestan! He was the favorite of the brigade. No one loved horses as much as he did! In his invariable black cloak, with his orderly, he scoured day and night, getting provisions for the brigade. Much later, Sazonov learns about the fate of the dashing horseman: a blade and a bullet in civilian clothes passed him, but the closed Decree struck him on the spot! Having put on all the award under a cloak, he, accompanied by a special officer, arrived at the assembly point. When the head of the convoy, a lieutenant of the NKVD, from the former re-enlisted officers, seeing Alikhanov with orders to his chest, ordered to remove the awards, the old cavalryman refused to comply with the order. Two guards beat him and threw him into a wagon. He did not reach the place of exile of fellow countrymen - on the

with a piece of barbed wire, the proud highlander opened his veins and died, unable to bear the shame and disgrace.

There were no further questions regarding the discussion of measures under the closed Decree. Everyone sat silently, with concentrated faces, feeling the heavy hand of the Great Violence, but none of those present would openly admit this. Most of them did not have any doubts that this measure was necessary, especially since it was approved at the top. And, according to the party tradition established for a long time, they all unanimously accepted and approved the villainous resolution of the Central Committee of the party and the inhuman Decree, dooming hundreds of thousands of innocent people to torment ... The ingeniously created system of coercion excluded the human right to express compassion and mercy.

Here the principle was at work - whoever is not with us is against us, and everyone was afraid! And if someone had sympathy, then under fear of trouble, he hid it, trying not to show his weakness. So it was with Sazonov. He had his own opinion, and he would have expressed it, but, looking back at his colleagues, he saw an expression of detachment on their faces and realized that he was alone in his sympathy and that none of them would share his views and support him! Meanwhile, the speaker from the Center turned to the tasks of special officers at the current stage of the war. The impressionable Sazonov noticed that the visiting general was dressed in a well-tailored tunic with gold

epaulettes, blue breeches, and boots gleaming with varnish. Among the sitting members of the presidium, in modest tunics sticking out from under the belts, with field epaulettes, he looked like the personification of power - distant, inaccessible Moscow. The rejection of the whole appearance of a smart general gave Dmitry Vasilyevich a critical attitude towards his report. However, let us note: the people of that generation, the survivors, remember that when someone speaking to any audience began to talk about victories at the fronts, he would certainly mention that all this was achieved thanks to the brilliant leadership of the Supreme Commander and the Communist Party of Bolsheviks led by him. And this time, too,

everyone stood up, applauding, and it lasted for several minutes. The Presidium was in full view of everyone, and it was noticeable that everyone there was tired of applauding and looking at the Moscow general,

but he continued selflessly, with unflagging energy to clap, looking at the presidium, and the front-line generals, obeying the example of the distinguished guest, kept looking at him and clapping their hands with enthusiasm. It is not known how long this "enthusiasm" would have continued, but the gold-chasing visitor, at last, apparently, got tired and stopped this competition; took his place, wiping his face and neck with a snow-white handkerchief, and continued his report. The general referred to the state wisdom of the Supreme and his personal instructions on the transfer of the Head of the Special Departments from the NKVD to the People's Commissariat of Defense - this made it possible to bring the special officers closer to the Red Army, to its political agencies and in close unity successfully carry out the assigned tasks to defeat the enemy. He repeatedly turned to his notes and reported on thousands of exposed German intelligence agents. Many of those present knew the value of these hastily trained spies among our hungry prisoners. There were far fewer real, skilled agents and saboteurs among them. It is likely that the Abwehr also had skilled, seasoned accomplices, and Dmitry Vasilyevich heard and knew about this from documents, but he did not have a chance to personally meet with them; and he certainly did not imagine that one of them, dangerous and

skillful, would pass next to him. And the general turned to the issue of urgent and long-term tasks, from which it followed that now that Sazonov has received the duty to conduct operational intelligence, the heads of the Special Departments must master this most important area of work -

Moscow is waiting for results! Almost the entire leadership of the Special Branches was skeptical about the new functions. All this required additional efforts, new funds, people, and this work was supposed to be done without increasing staff. And, most importantly, there was a serious responsibility for the selection, study of the education of special intelligence agents. In the ordinary, everyday work of special officers, the risk of failure in development did not entail the responsibility that arose now, in the conditions of a dangerous struggle with the enemy on his territory. And the general, as if objecting to those of little faith, began to convince that the army Chekists had all the conditions for the successful fulfillment of the tasks set by the Supreme Commander himself! And richly sweetened the pill, praising the operational staff of the

hope that the personnel will justify the trust of the leadership of the Main Directorate and personally

Comrade Abakumov! A break was announced soon after. Everyone left the semi-dark hangar, adapted for meetings, film screenings, performances by artists. Sunlight hit my eyes; white clouds floated across the sky, a fresh breeze blew, whistling in the camouflage net hanging from the hangar gate. The headquarters of the Western Front (in a couple of weeks it will be called the 3rd Belorussian) was located near Smolensk, on the territory of a German airfield. Camouflaged anti-aircraft guns stuck around, in caponiers there were camouflaged Dodges with new rapid-fire cannons in case of a raid.

Sazonov noticed how around the joker Kruzhilin gathered bunch of officers. He came closer and heard his rich bass:

- At our meeting, the Member of the Military Council Mekhlis himself should have been present, he never missed such an opportunity. The great artist speaks beautifully and wonderfully. And those who spoke to him always looked pale, and he, as always, spoke last and for a very long time. It seems that before him everyone had already spoken out in detail - no, he would definitely start all over again, turn to philosophy and definitely remember Hegel and Kant. Someone

asked Kruzhilin: "Why didn't

he come to us this time?" And he, slightly

lowering his voice, said: - They

say that he was recalled to the capital, that's why you saw the red-haired colonel in the presidium - now he is temporarily him.

After the meeting, the special officers hastily dispersed to their units. Sazonov so wanted to have a chat with someone, and suddenly he saw a neighbor - Denisenko. He did not forget how he, with sincere simplicity, gave him advice on the occasion of the arrival of the inspectors. Smiling slyly,

Denisenko asked: "Well, Sazonov, how did you like your father's decree?" You, as an educated person, tell me, was there ever such a thing under the kings to punish an entire people?! - And, lowering his voice and looking back not without fear, Denisenko continued: - I have a hefty literate person on my [PC \[45\]](#) - a former engineer in civilian life, is in correspondence with his fellow countrymen from Western Ukraine, and they

serve in other parts. They told him that for the murder of Vatutin, three villages were burned, and all the villagers were loaded like cattle into a freight train and sent to Siberia. We were told all the time that the Bolsheviks were the most humane... And how is it possible, the whole nation suffers because of some bandits! Only the fascists could do this, but we are the liberators. They talk about it on every political information. I can't understand such cruelty. If you look, the North Caucasus is not a deep rear. And what kind of danger did the Chechens, the Ingush, along with the Kalmyks, pose in February of this year? Sazonov unexpectedly heard in his words his

own, experienced, thought over many times - what was born in him when he single-handedly talked about draconian measures against those who, without intent, inadvertently stumbled before the Soviet authorities and suffered a heavy punishment, but even after that will live with the stigma. The Vengeful System provided for, after serving his sentence, to leave him forever in the filing cabinet of organs to monitor him! Then Sazonov believed that he alone saw the unfair treatment of thousands of people who were in trouble due to the will of circumstances. And now a like-minded person has appeared next to him, from his own service, thinking and also condemning the excessive cruelty of the policy of his state. How grateful he was to this good-natured Ukrainian for understanding him and sharing his views. After talking all the way, they parted as friends.

Chapter XXIII. PROPHETIC DREAM

The spring of the third year of the war has come. The entire front from the Barents to the Black Sea moved steadily to the west. In the south, our troops, approaching the Crimea, kneaded the Carpathian mud, aiming to reach the western border. And only one Western Front, without moving, like a sheep dog, silently preparing to jump and realizing that an experienced and strong beast was standing in front of it, was waiting for reinforcements

and commands from the Center. The front headquarters did not have complete data on the enemy. Separate information coming from blockaded partisan detachments and reconnaissance aircraft indicated that the Germans had prepared defenses many hundreds of kilometers to the rear, and it would take a lot of strength and skill from the entire front to overcome it.

The reconnaissance departments of the armies of the Western Front unsuccessfully tried to get at least a minimum of information in the front line, but the enemy filled it with maneuvering groups from jaeger units, motorized patrols, and mobile radio posts to detect our radio equipment. Our scouts repeatedly crossed the front line, but the Germans immediately discovered them and, using their superiority in forces and means, drove like hares through forests and swamps, preventing them from settling anywhere even for a day. Front reconnaissance units suffered heavy losses. The reconnaissance reserve of the experienced, brave and desperate was melting like March snow, but there were still no results. The big army authorities were already looking askance at the leaders of intelligence, stubbornly forcing them again and again to throw not first-class, but simply ordinary intelligence officers recruited in units from among volunteers, there, to hell with the teeth, to certain death! A good intelligence officer needs to be taught for a long time, trained, trained like a boxer, but there was no time for this - but there was an order that must be followed, regardless of losses. There was no hope

that the scouts would be able to find shelter and help from the inhabitants of the frontline. Long before the stabilization of the front, the Germans evicted the entire local population from there, and this strip became a "dead" zone, without a single haze and spark, without

dog barking and sleigh tracks. And only the croaking of crows and wolf howling at night revived this land abandoned by people! Once,

in Sazonov's division, a teenager jumped into the trench of the military guard, dressed in a jacket and trousers made of calfskins, with fur up and in a white shaggy dog hat - he looked like a forest ghost. Almost all divisional authorities came to listen to his adventures. It was interesting how he managed to cross more than a hundred kilometers of the front line of the enemy. The boy spoke slowly, stuttering slightly and choosing his words; when he began to tell how his mother and sister died of typhus in the winter, and the cow was killed by wolves on a white day in the yard, he burst into tears, burying his head in his knees, cut into a short flight of stairs, and only thin shoulders trembled from his soundless weeping. He said that his family lived on a forest cordon - impenetrable swamps separated them from the rest of the world, and it was possible to get to them only when they were frozen. He studied in a neighboring village and finished four classes before the war. Father was drafted into the army. In the spring of 1943, the Germans evicted the neighboring village and burned the houses. At the beginning of winter, the mother went to get salt and found a cache of rags in one of the farmsteads of the burnt village, brought it home - from that time the illness began. Mother and sister burned out in a typhoid fever, delirious and not regaining consciousness. It was frosty outside then, the earth froze; he dug a grave underground, dug out the earth in buckets and buried them in his own house. The wolves came every night, but the shed was of good wood and they only frightened the cow. Well, one afternoon he released her, and a pack of wolves, emboldened, broke into the yard. He himself barely had time to run into the house and through the gap he saw how they, snapping their teeth, rushed at the cow, and she kept backing away to the barn. Another moment and everything was

over.

And he picked up what was left of their nurse, locked the door, boiled the remains of the bones with meat, and a day later he left for the east. He walked without a compass, spent the night in a spruce forest, tying himself to the trunk, shivering from the cold. I saw several times along the clearings of German soldiers on all-terrain vehicles and on skis. It is good that there was already a crust - he walked without falling through, leaving no traces behind him.

When they showed him a layout of the terrain on the path of his movement, reproduced by order of Colonel Lepin, he,

Surprised, he stood in front of him for a long time, looking at the sprawling massifs of forests, swamps, streams, and then confidently pointed out the places where he had seen German soldiers. Looking at the toy huts of the villages, he said: "Uncle, you have shown it wrong here - Nemchura burned Nikitovka, only pipes remained; along this country road to the regional center forty miles. My aunt and I, when I was in the second grade, went to sell [\[46\]](#) cranberries and hare skins at the raipo, and on the way to the — hit - zavirukha we barely escaped! .."

So bit by bit they collected information about the hidden, silent side, where foreign soldiers looked longingly and apprehensively at the boundless distance of the deserted space, waiting for their unlucky fate. The leadership of

Smersh hastily made a decision in Moscow to entrust intelligence functions to its bodies. If it's sensible to understand, then the army special officers were not ready to engage in reconnaissance in the active army - this required experience, skills, personnel and time in order to train the scouts with everything they might need to successfully complete the task. Sazonov, along with other special officers, doubted that Smersh intelligence in such a short period would become more effective than army intelligence. But the decision contained a reference to the fact that the Supreme Commander personally instructed General Abakumov to engage in reconnaissance in the army. And what after that there could be conversations, doubts! At not a single meeting did any of the leadership of the special officers speak out about the upcoming difficulties in organizing a new direction of work. Everyone kept silent and agreed with the decision of Moscow - they knew that the instructions of the Supreme Commander were not subject to discussion, but must be carried out strictly and on time!

At the front, where every day and hour could be the last on this sinful earth, many, somewhere in the subconscious, had ominous forebodings of inevitable disaster long before it arrived. And many had their own signs in this regard. So it was with Dmitry Vasilyevich before each of his wounds. At night, a Red Army soldier convicted of looting came to him in a dream. The story connected with him happened in the autumn of the forty-first year, during the retreat to Kalinin. Sazonov's division, exhausted to death by a long retreat, bombing, fear of encirclement and lack of food and

ammunition, retreated to the east. Once on the march, they received an order to hit the flank of the Germans, who were smashing the neighboring division, after a couple of hours, without artillery preparation, they attacked the enemy, crushed his outposts, and, opening fire on the Germans fleeing in panic, the battalion of the advanced regiment jumped out across a wide clearing right onto a country road, where he was met by about a dozen armored personnel carriers stretched along the road. Hitting the battalion almost point-blank and scything it in half, they continued, as if in a shooting gallery, to shoot the riflemen who lay down in front of them and their commanders. And then in reverse, slowly, snarling with the fire of heavy machine guns, they retreated with impunity, showing their armored superiority. In the evening, a hefty tall man in a short overcoat was brought to Sazonov - they caught him crawling among the dead and robbing them. In his hands was a duffel bag full of money. He did not have time to straighten and smooth them. He turned inside the pockets of his tunics and trousers and, finding money, crumpled it up with blood-sticky fingers and stuffed it into his "sidor". It was not easy to search through the clothes of the murdered and find in them a secret place where the deceased could keep his hard-earned money. There was a lot of blood: congealing on the dead, it turned into jelly and was cold to the touch. But he did not disdain and crawled from one to another, rummaging through the cold bodies with his bloodied long hands, throwing out letters, photographs, pressing them with his elbows into the swamp slush. For this occupation, he was caught by soldiers from the funeral team. He did not even have time to wipe his hands from the blood and it darkened between the fingers with a mourning border. Sazonov remembered his long arms, his face overgrown with many days of bristles, burning eyes and the conviction that he was right. "Tell me, commander, why do the dead need money?! he asked in a hollow voice. And, addressing those who detained him: - And I really need them. I have seven souls at home - the youngest is three, and the eldest will be fifteen only in winter. I took a big sin on my soul - I robbed the dead, but this is for the sake of the children, so that they survive. From the front he was led by two men who looked like him, overgrown, in overcoats stained with swamp slurry, with an evil gleam in their eyes. They didn't finish it - they shot him on the way, explaining that he was killed while trying to escape. The so

And now, for the second night, this Red Army soldier comes to Sazonov in a dream, holding his bloodied temple with his left hand, and in his right hand he has a duffel bag, swollen from crumpled credit cards. And again, as then, he asks: "Comrade commander, why do the dead need money ?!" Sazonov wanted to answer him, but each time he woke up, struck by the reality of a dream that foreshadowed some kind of trouble. He remembered that before his first and second wounds, the soldier also appeared to him in a dream. But now where to expect misfortune? In his service, he has a full openwork: the check of the department was successful, he received the rank, Colonel Tumanov recognized the work as positive. And the presentiment, having settled in it, did not disappear and, like a splinter,

occasionally made itself felt. And suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, a request suddenly came from the training center, where five future scouts were sent. They asked to double-check and confirm the information on Sergeant Knyazhich: under what circumstances did he enter the field hospital, to identify the persons who were with him, to interrogate them, to find out everything to the smallest detail about his stay there.

At the same time, Bondarev, having familiarized himself with the request, instead of discussing how best to complete the task, began to be indignant - he tried to prove the uselessness of an additional check of Knyazhich, since he had been fighting since the first days of the war and, retreating from the border itself, could freely desert, but remained in part, has a wound, has proven himself positively in the service. In addition, authorized Nikiforov confirmed his reliability in writing, no "hooks" were received during the secret study. Then Bondarev repeated that although his counterintelligence experience was still small, his political intuition told him that in this case additional verification of Knyazhich was not required. Sazonov grimaced

with annoyance: after that semi-public flogging inflicted on Bondarev by the inspectors, he began to refer less often to his political experience, but sometimes he allowed himself to remind those around him that he had come to the department from political agencies. Dmitry Vasilievich did not want to enter into useless verbal disputes with his "beloved", and he asked Kalmykov to bring letter files for the communications battalion.

Now it is already difficult to establish who came up with the idea of starting such cases, but everything that fell into the secret, fine-mesh network of political control of military counterintelligence settled in them. The smaller the cells, the more information about the internal life of the unit. In the official language, this was called information about the combat capability of the unit. Under this heading could be attributed everything that was prohibited by the charter. Sazonov's former boss, Major Guskov, loved it when the lettering was weighty and plump: "I can tell by one type of lettering what this or that" opera "is worth ..." He always had in honor those employees who tirelessly collected any information - with or without reason, just to fill the letter case and create the appearance of operational work. And Guskov rooted, encouraged this tradition and demanded the expansion of awareness. But not only he demanded this - all the leading installations of the Smersh Headquarters talked about strengthening and improving the information apparatus and the combat capability of the army and navy. A murky stream of information from soldier's life entered the letter cases: from the theft of footcloths, unauthorized absences, gambling for money, careless handling of weapons and much more, which was not of interest to special officers, but rather was material for commanders and political workers to educate personnel. Wandering through

the jungle of lettering in search of the necessary materials, we had to be patient. Not without a smile, Sazonov read an informant's report that accidentally caught his eye that during a card game Sergeant Skvortsov read anti-Soviet verses: "Farewell, unwashed Russia, a country of slaves, a country of masters. And you, blue uniforms, and you, the

people obedient to them! .." Senior Lieutenant Nikiforov, in whose operational service the communications battalion was, giving the task on this fact, indicated: "Continue monitoring Skvortsov and find out what he meant by "blue uniforms". Executive, diligent Nikiforov - he was a little lacking in education - finished the seven-year plan and went to work - to help his father. It was difficult for him, a native of the village, to comprehend the possibility of using communication technology, not to mention poetry. But in political studies, he diligently outlined the history of the CPSU (b) and enriched himself with knowledge of the fight against

party enemies. Therefore, he even tried to start a development on two soldiers with the names Kamenev and Zinoviev, believing that they could be related to the enemies mentioned in the Short Course.

Finally, Sazonov selected several reports on Knyazhich from the letter file: all of them were of little content, repeating almost word for word that Sergeant Knyazhich was good at his duties, mastered the material part of a mobile platoon, carried out all orders in good faith, took an active part in political studies, hostile does not allow statements, approves the policy of the party and government. And only two out of six informants noticed noteworthy features of Knyazhich.

The informer Grom, one of the people who have the ability to sensibly express their thoughts, pointed out that Knyazhich, in his own words, graduated only from a parish school, but he understands politics better than the company's political officer. He says that recently he worked as a locksmith, but he could not explain what his rank was. Thunder claimed that Knyazhich was too neat in everyday life, knew the rules of hygiene and therefore did not look like a native of the countryside. And he also has skills in medicine: he very skillfully made a dressing on the shoulder of the "source" - only professional doctors can do this. And at the end of the report, he comes to the conclusion that Knyazhich is not the person he claims to be! In the reference to this message, detective Nikiforov writes that Grom, although an observant and competent informant, suffers from the part of inventing, obsessed with the fact that there are only spies around him.

Another informant - Verny - said that Knyazhich had a fake Red Army book and therefore he did not show it to anyone and kept it in a secret pocket. The informant did not give any other arguments on this part. But the verification of this fact disproved everything, and only one fact remained unconfirmed: in his unit, Knyazhich was listed as missing in August 1943, and a check at the hospital indicates that he entered there in September, and an entry in the Red Army book confirms her extradition spoiled. Sazonov more than once met with the negligence of records and records

in hospitals and in units, and he was already inclined to convince himself of this, but

looking at the request, he caught a vague anxiety in himself; the proximity of some kind of trouble awaiting him. All sorts of devilry and this prophetic dream about a marauder climbed into my head! Repeating to himself that all this was not good, he called Bondarev, sat him next to him, as was his habit as a teacher, and dictated a plan for rechecking Knyazhich.

Chapter XXIV. THE WAY TO THE THRESHOLD

A storm raged in Bondarev's soul: he simply couldn't stand Sazonov anymore. Hot hatred overwhelmed his entire being, preventing him from concentrating on the upcoming affairs. It seemed to him that after those humiliating and shameful scenes with the inspectors and with the head of division Kuzakov, his boss was simply mocking him; humiliates him by being petty. And now - I sat next to him and almost forced him to write a plan for an additional check of Knyazhich. Mentally entering into a polemic with Sazonov, he proved to him the uselessness of these measures. And why the hell did you need to specify when Knyazhich arrived at the hospital and why there are discrepancies in the time of his arrival there! After all, it is clear even to a fool that Knyazhich is a reliable person! Already three hundred times he has proved his devotion to the Soviet government and the working people, since he himself is from a laborer

families.

Everything that came from the boss disgusted his nature, and only from one consciousness that he commands him, gives him instructions, controls him, revolted, tempted him to act contrary to his orders! And now Bondarev was not thinking about how to better and faster fulfill Sazonov's order, but about how to create the appearance of work and do everything in his own way. The plan of how to turn it around so that Sazonov would not suspect anything matured immediately at the exit from him. Bondarev now bitterly recalled how he had failed to topple this mediocre teacher, but then it seemed - one more effort, and he would be defeated! But Colonel Tumanov did not have enough party principles, and he preferred to support this apolitical type! Still would! They are all at the same time, they do not like the fact that a politically trained officer, devoted to the party and having rich experience in leadership work, has entered their special police milieu! Such thoughts and general mood depressed him, made him irritable and quarrelsome, and, as usual, he took all his anger out on the orderly. Sazonov, having checked Colonel Lepin's readiness to meet with him by a conventional phone call, walked towards him,

anticipating the joy of meeting him. Everything Lepin talked about was interesting -

he was such a man! Sazonov would like to borrow a lot from the colonel: impeccably accurate language, logic of reasoning, conciseness, the ability to highlight the main thing and draw an unobtrusive conclusion.

All this together greatly distinguished him from many with whom Sazonov had to meet on duty. During the

difficult war, the front and the army carried out a selection among the officers; gradually it filled up with those who were more capable of following orders! But compared to the commanders of the cadre army, they have other habits in everyday life and communication and a special style of behavior. Sazonov remembered

and knew the pre-war command staff. Now these commanders rarely met, they could be recognized immediately: by their bearing, by emphatically respectful, "you", by addressing juniors in rank, by their ability to maintain their own and preserve the dignity of their subordinates, by the absence of rollicking obscenities in their vocabulary.

Among the new officers, however, there was a flourishing of "tsukanie" to the younger ones, revived from the worst vices of the tsarist army - now it was called "pulling". To pull off the younger with the use of sophisticated curses for any offense and arrange a public performance out of this became for many of them a matter of valor and special officer chic. This is how a person works - the bad sticks to him faster and, most importantly, has a contagious effect on others. At the same time, the elders tried to pass for witty and resourceful and did not take into account the fact that the younger ones were sometimes suitable for their fathers - fashion dictated this type of upbringing and no one, as Sazonov knew, prevented this, did not forbid the "slinging" of subordinates. Oddly enough, the military intelligentsia also took part in this. The chief of staff of the Western Front, General Pokrovsky, a recognized authority on staff culture, could say at a meeting: "This remotely resembles a disorder of the third degree - a fire in a mess during a flood! .." The artillery regiment commander, a former associate professor of Leningrad University, a young handsome man, having built personnel and obviously imitating someone, a little bit in the nose, with long pauses, said: "Eagles, I myself love a mess, but I prefer that everyone would know their place in it." The regiment admired the resourcefulness of its commander and responded to him with friendly encouraging neighing.

The sergeants also contributed with impunity to the education of the rank and file. Once, at the station, Sazonov himself witnessed how a pedestal-shaped patrol foreman with two medals "For Courage" on his immense chest, chastising a soldier for not giving him honor, in a hoarse commanding voice inquired menacingly: "You say you didn't notice me ?! What am I to you, mandovka, so as not to see me? And then, without reducing his ferocity, he went over the eyes of the violator of military discipline, comparing them with the genitals of a stallion. The young, timid soldier only blushed and blinked his eyes - he never heard such foul language.

On the way to the headquarters, Sazonov almost swam in some places on the water: it overflowed and stood, covered with last year's foliage, and only in the thickets of spruce was there still snow in some places. In that year, spring seemed to have gone mad - for a whole week there was warmth unprecedented in these parts. The soldiers left the water, moving from the lowland to the hillocks, and again dug caponiers, dugouts, cracks, got along huts from birch poles and spruce branches.

Sazonov met with the chief of staff in the far section of the headquarters dugout. The table for tea had already been laid, and Lépine, taut as always, greeted him cordially and seated him at the table. Over tea, he spoke of the expected additions to the division, which, he said, in a couple of weeks, at this rate of infusion of fresh blood, would return to normal and look like a rich bride with a good dowry. And he himself, enlivened by the enumeration of the units entering the division, said:

"I suppose as soon as the roads dry up we'll cross swords with Field Marshal Bush. Yesterday I listened to a broadcast from Berlin. Goebbels believes that only providence prompted the Fuhrer to appoint one of the best generals of the Wehrmacht, who possessed military leadership abilities and an Aryan character, which he showed almost in his mother's womb, to be the commander of the Center group. And the announcer excitedly recalled with delight that the divisions of his 16th Army swept through France like a hurricane, sweeping away everything in its path. We know that in France they didn't even take off their cannon covers, bypassed the Maginot Line and, without meeting resistance, rolled along the asphalt to Paris. Let's see what it will be here in action! This is not France for him, and not the forty-first, but the forty-fourth, and we

learned during this time! Lepin remarked, and, taking a document out of the folder, handed it over to Sazonov. - Check it out, Dmitry Vasilyevich, this is your part.

Reading the document, Sazonov immediately realized that this was a group of off-line scouts, selected by his department, where Bondarev distinguished himself. There were competently scheduled measures for their transfer across the front. Much was envisaged for this: distracting maneuvers in the areas of neighboring divisions, and the participation of the best sappers of the division in clearing the passage, scout guides, observers of the front line with a sharp eye, and interaction with military intelligence. Responsibility for the transfer of the group was assigned to the Special Department of the N-th army, and the mechanics of actions and the time of the operation had to be determined and coordinated with the troops by Sazonov. He did not know, and how could he know that the planned intelligence operation, where he was the executor, was to be the first sign of the ambitious General Abakumov and his relatives about the assignment of intelligence functions to the Special Departments. It was a large-scale but risky proposal that visited the Supreme and received His consent, but not approval. He doubted that Smersh could successfully cope with this task, and on the other hand, why not agree - no material costs, but another source will appear and there will be something to compare army intelligence reports with, and this is additional control. Less lies, more responsibility! So the Supreme Commander decided and agreed, drawing with a blue pencil on the Abakumov document.

Now Abakumov needed results - then the doubts of the Supreme would be dispelled and he would not regret that he agreed, and perhaps even approve and note the efforts of the head of Smersh.

Not every historian will be able to penetrate into the motives of His actions: much will remain a mystery! He did not like to reveal and explain his intentions either in big or small matters, especially when it concerned methods of controlling the army and improving management in the System he created. Therefore, the proposal of General Abakumov was considered immediately. Here the interests of the Supreme coincided with the ambition of His faithful servant. Tom really wanted to be in the leadership of the army not only an oprichnik, but also a fighting, equal general, on his own

carry out operational reconnaissance, take part in the planning of military operations and share the laurels of upcoming victories!

Lepin pushed back the black curtain covering the map of the Western Front on the wall. There was a huge ledge on which the troops of Field Marshal Bush were stationed, who aimed a menacing wedge directly at their front and at the flanks of neighboring fronts. The chief of staff outlined the

boundaries of the enemy ledge with a pointer and explained that it was not by chance that the Germans began to prepare this bridgehead for defense in the spring of forty-three. In the language of the staff officer, briefly and convincingly, he explained that the German bridgehead was invulnerable to aircraft and tanks. And the ledge itself covers an area of several hundred thousand square kilometers. Nature here has not stinted on thousands of lakes, swamps, hundreds of rivers and streams.

"Here, for example," and, pointing with a pointer, he pointed to a point on the map, "here, in the front line of our division, there is a small swamp, up to forty miles in circumference, and next to it is another, slightly smaller one. The Germans are excellent fortifiers: they will not miss such an opportunity to set up two dozen pillboxes, bunkers at the junction, and then our infantry will lie down, but tanks and heavy artillery will not pass, they will get bogged down - swamps and swamps are all around ... We cannot build roads in these dead places. One hope is that the upcoming offensive will be carried out not only by ours, but also by other fronts. There is a possibility that as a result of strikes from two or three fronts there will be weak points in their defense, and this will force Bush to put up reserves, and he has few of them. And there will be "Trishkin's caftan" - he will cover his head, his legs can be seen, but no matter how much the rope hangs, the end of the adventure will be! If we had information about the enemy a hundred kilometers deep,

this would save us from unnecessary casualties! Only Lepin always spoke of losses with pain in his voice. Other commanders never thought about it - they had one concern: to fulfill the order, no matter at what cost! Lepin was frightened by the unexplored forces of the enemy, and information about him was scant and meager - through them, as in the taiga without a compass, you cannot directly break through to the goal. And after four or five hours of the offensive, the division will be bled dry. A thousand killed per hour - this is the prepared price, when not knowing the ford ... And the enemy hid: he

fields; dug deep into the passages of messages, fox holes, countless trenches in case of shelling, bristled with firing points, hundreds of mortars and guns of all calibers, skillfully camouflaged in the forest thickets. And only the deciphered reconnaissance aviation maps gave a general idea of the powerful German defense, but even this information could only be suitable for the General Staff and the front headquarters, and they were of little use for the division.

Chapter XXV. COOPERATION IN REPLACEMENT OF HARD SERVICE

For the second month, Andschei Knyazhich was in the front-line training reconnaissance battalion. Located in a former estate, surrounded by barbed wire, equipped with hidden observation posts along the outer perimeter, covered by two anti-aircraft batteries in case of an airborne assault, the training reconnaissance battalion of the Western Front was going through the time of arrangement, getting used to new conditions instead of the Moscow region, where it lodged for a long time.

Experienced people say that a person gets used to everything except the cold! The time has passed when Knyazhich, finding himself in the communications battalion after the hospital, walked, as it seemed to him, on the edge of a knife, expecting from day to day a complete exposure. The fear of an inevitable arrest gradually disappeared, and confidence in the

inaccessibility of Smersh grew stronger. True, already twice the bespectacled, corrosive personnel officer meticulously interrogated him about how he ended up in the hospital. And twice the bespectacled man persistently specified why he had not returned to his unit. Knyazhich, while still there, learned from the wounded that in the front-line hospital where he was, there was an order that privates and sergeants could be sent to any unit upon discharge. The personnel officer also knew about this, but for the sake of order, he carefully asked all the circumstances twice, hoping that Knyazhich would answer discordantly, but Andrzej behaved confidently and made sure that this was an ordinary check of information that was doubtful. He was a fatalist and believed that love for the only one, blue-eyed, would save him. She is waiting, and he will return to her, and for this he must survive.

He understood that slowly but steadily the Germans were losing the war. Only he didn't think about it now, he didn't despair, he had one passionate desire - to escape from the captivity of mortal danger, and this requires not only caution, but also constant monitoring of oneself from the outside. The role of the former peasant laborer, reinforced by the Polish-Belarusian accent, aroused sympathy and indulgence of the commanders. So it was in the communications battalion,

where he ended up immediately after the hospital, and here, too, course commanders, mentors and teachers sympathized with him, knowing about his origins. He could only unobtrusively show his "illiteracy" and "naivety of judgments." Once, in the German

language class, he forgot himself and made an unforgivable mistake: when translating the text, he, forgetting himself, quickly blurted out a complex turnover involuntarily, "plus-perfect". The teacher, a strongly Russified German from the Comintern, looked at him attentively and with surprise and, as it seemed, began to carefully look at him in the lessons. Knyazhich knew that the entire staff of the "training school" repeatedly gave subscriptions to inform the special officer about the slightest signs of suspicious behavior of students. However, the German was by nature a systematic person - he needed to accumulate two or three such cases in order to make his suspicions solid. Andrzej did not give him such an opportunity - this time fate saved him from failure!

And in many ways he was helped by Bondarev, who simply stood up for his protégé, dismissing all suspicions, proving the needlessness of additional checks and hoping that he would receive the order promised by his boss for the selection of a reconnaissance group. He went on an official forgery, demanding from his subordinates only positive information on those being checked, and where there were doubtful data, he himself compiled certificates, referring to agents and informants with whom he allegedly talked. And he continued to do everything to protect Knyazhich even when a request was received from the military intelligence battalion, which alerted Sazonov. Bondarev wanted to prove to his boss that his political intuition was superior to Smersh's instructions on the issues of verifying persons involved in tacit cooperation with counterintelligence agencies.

While Sazonov was accepting into operational service the units that were newly entering the division, and Bondarev, dissatisfied with his position, harboring anger and a desire for revenge, unknowingly contributed to the failure of the planned front-line operation and continued to create an official forgery, at that time Her Majesty fate was preparing an unexpected surprise. And it had to happen that at that time Major Kurakin, a former associate professor, Germanist, and now the main and authoritative "specialist" in the search for a particularly important German

agents, spent several nights in conversations with the former adviser to the German commandant of the city of Smolensk Sievers Jan Benediktovich, a white émigré from the nobility, sympathetic to the ideas of the NTS[47] and even contributing to the formation of its branch in Smolensk. Based on the totality of all the crimes committed by the former adviser, he, according to the Lubyanka investigators, deserved capital punishment - execution: for treason, cooperation with the invaders, espionage, creation and participation in anti-Soviet organizations and other crimes provided for in Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

Transferred from Colonel Tumanov to the Smersh Directorate of the Western Front and already certified for the post of colonel, Kurakin opened up new horizons for using knowledge on the history of Russian-German relations in the pre-revolutionary period. In one of the nightly conversations, Major Kurakin, who was inclined to digressions into history, found out some information about the related branch of the person under investigation, which was related to the diplomatic service of Prussia. And Sievers was amazed: unlike the assertive but limited interrogators of the inner prison, the military counterintelligence officer sitting in front of him turned out to be a man of high culture, spoke German and, moreover, knew not only the names of his distant relatives, but also where, when, for what merits on history has marked them in the diplomatic field. The former adviser had no need to hide his collaboration with the Germans. He frankly told everything that the investigators asked him about, without locking himself up and without reducing his guilt, so he passed all the "charms" of the then investigative unit of the

NKVD. On the basis of the case file and after the first night conversations, Kurakin was convinced that the accused Sievers, without hiding anything, as if in spirit, told the investigation about his service in the Smolensk commandant's office, admitted his guilt and patiently awaited his fate. Representatives of the Center solved their problem: they obtained confessions from the defendant, on their basis they drew up a strong and solid indictment, and now they were waiting for the command to

send the case to the Special Conference of the NKVD of the USSR. At first, Sievers showed no interest either in the conversation or in the inter

cause of his depression. But Kurakin gradually "talked" to his interlocutor and now he could say with confidence that the former adviser was a valuable source of operational information about the enemy. So Kurakin had the idea of the possibility of using it to identify those who had settled in the rear. Western Front of German agents. Being in the service of the Germans, Sievers always felt his second-

rate. No, they were not pushed around or insulted, but he always felt his inequality with them, and this despite the commandant's own disposition towards him. The Germans needed his knowledge, advice on organizing the management of the population and urban economy. In his youth, after graduating from the lyceum, he got a job as an assistant to the Taurida governor for law and trade, and now his advice on organizing private business, and especially after the Battle of Kursk, was perceived by the organizers of the "new" order as a belated prescription of a humane doctor to a doomed patient. They believed that here, in the east, only force and execution could give the desired result! Sievers, like most thinking emigrants, believed that only a strong predator could crush the Soviets, and assumed

that sooner or later the Germans would give independence to the new Russia, but he was convinced that it was a mirage in the desert. It would seem that they should have created an army of Russian prisoners, but, as he understood from the conversations of officials who came from the Rosenberg Ministry for the Occupied Lands, Hitler himself and his entourage were against this idea. Hence the disappointment and disbelief in the organizers of the "new" order. But he did not say a word about this to the Lubyanka investigators, he did not beat his chest, talking about his long-standing anti-fascist sentiments and that he was ready to go to the partisans. Kurakin, unlike the stubborn investigators, did not insist on Sievers' new confessions of voluntary service to the

enemy, did not fish out additional evidence of his guilt, but, maintaining delicacy, was more interested in what range of issues could be resolved in the commandant's office by the Abwehr, field gendarmerie, police.

At first, Sievers was waiting for another trick, so he answered all questions with restraint and dryness, but gradually he was imbued

sympathy for your interlocutor. His gentle look and respectful demeanor melted the ice of distrust of the former adviser, which had arisen earlier in dealing with the zealous service people of this strict institution. The solitary cell was replaced by a pleasant interview at night with strong seagulls with good dryers. They talked about many things, but the major never once asked and did not specify the reasons that pushed him to go to the service of the Germans. Late night

conversations were beneficial for both. The major collected good material for the search work: this information would have been lost, they were not of interest to the investigators, one thing was important to them - Sievers pleaded guilty. And during this time he forgot about depression, returned to normal and intuitively felt Kurakin's interest in his fate. His premonition did not deceive him: Kurakin drew up a memorandum based on the materials of the nightly conversations and prepared a multi-page report to General Abakumov, where he substantiated the need to use the former adviser as an identification agent. This category of agents in the counterintelligence agencies arose because, throughout the occupied territory of the Union and beyond, the Germans created an unprecedented number of large and small centers for combating organized resistance, as well as training centers where tens of thousands of general workers were trained - from camp guards, agents-propagandists, to saboteurs-subversives and piece units for central terror.

When the Boss received organ reports on the enemy's diabolical kitchen, in which Soviet people were mainly involved, He became furious! How could this happen, because He was loved by the people, He gave them a constitution, and millions of the former hopeless Russia, mired in superstition and the church web, finally saw the light of enlightenment, received an education, joined the culture - and suddenly they betrayed their Motherland and became Hitler's accomplices! They must be punished by vengeance—that was His will! At the end of the war, he demanded from the allies the extradition of all Soviets who collaborated with the Germans, and on the eve of the first day of Victory over fascism, which was met by joyful Europe, he signed the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars on the construction of one thousand filtration camps for one hundred thousand each, to check prisoners of war and persons, taken to Germany. Historians fail

to find out what He was talking about in private with the people's commissar, but His instructions were carried out even before the specified time.

The war did not stifle His burning interest in particular cases of betrayal, the motives and reasons for voluntary service to the "new" order, and He read with interest specials. NKVD reports about captured and exposed collaborators. The inner circle knew about this and occasionally threw him the most interesting, especially the former, stories of betrayal, high-ranking subjects!

those, his

Kurakin's plans included obtaining a pardon for the accused Sievers and not allowing his case to be considered in the Special Conference. He had to desperately enter the fairway, bypassing the pitfalls of the bureaucratic Lubyanka, where there was nothing to do without an experienced pilot. And if it weren't for the recommendation of the current head of the Smersh department, General Zheleznikov, his report would have wandered around the curators' offices until the end of the war. Before leaving for Moscow, Zheleznikov advised him, in case of difficulties, to contact the responsible person of the Smersh Secretariat, Lieutenant Colonel Mitrofanov, taking with him a couple of flasks of alcohol. In appearance, Mitrofanov was inconspicuous, of fawn color, with an attentive look and a suspiciously slight blush on his face. No one knew where and from what

time he came to the People's Commissariat, but he was a real pilot on the rapids of the Lubyanka! Big and small bosses came and went - they didn't even try to delve into the office kitchen vnudel, and he, who knew all its subtleties, manipulated, confused the passage of papers and their design so that no one except him knew the intricacies of their movement and relied only on him. He could strengthen the careers of some and drown others! Kurakin gave him a front-line gift with a broad gesture - two liter flasks of pure alcohol. This sealed the fate of his report. A couple of days later, late at night, he was summoned to Abakumov himself. The general, as a professional practitioner, was well versed in search work. On the whole, he approved Kurakin's

proposal and ordered that the report be cut from ten to three pages. And, looking at the major, in an instructive tone, he clearly and intelligibly explained that the Soviet government

he will not give any guarantees to traitors, but can only petition the Presidium of the Supreme Council to change the measure of restraint for the accused Sievers during the period of his performance of a particularly important state task. And he further explained that this was not an easy matter and could cause disagreement with the head of the investigative unit, and he could not order him now, since they were in different departments with him. And here, in the Center, Kurakin realized that the transfer of Smersh from the structure of the NKVD to the People's Commissariat of Defense strengthened and increased the authority of the special officers in the army, but deprived them of unity with the enforcement agencies, which sometimes gave rise to departmental skirmishes. But all went well; General Abakumov was considered - he was close to the Boss and conducted a political investigation from the General Staff to

the crew of the aircraft, the tank and the last infantryman.

Chapter XXVI. HOPES AND WISHES OF SIVERS

A few days later, Kurakin, pleased with himself, drew up documents no longer for the accused Sievers, but, according to the approved legend, for Lukin, a civilian food quality inspector in parts of the Western Front, which gave him the opportunity to freely visit civilian institutions, warehouses and military units. Now he was dressed in an officer's uniform, but even without officer's epaulettes, his gray temples and manners of a well-mannered man inspired confidence in random companions, mostly officers who flew the Douglas to Smolensk.

Moscow and the Tushino airfield vanished into the mist of a spring morning. And both of them, now Colonel Kurakin and his wingman, a former white émigré and a German accomplice, and now, by the will of the special forces, temporarily released from custody to carry out their tasks, needed each other like a sharp knife and

sheath. Kurakin had something to report to the authorities of the Smersh front department. He believed that he had won a small victory, having interested the leadership of Smersh with his report and having managed to snatch Sievers from the tenacious embrace of the Special Meeting. Now they were flying to the headquarters of the front, and they had to work together. For all the days of living together, Kurakin sincerely became attached to his "godson", finding more and more advantages in him. And, looking at the refreshed face of his companion, he was already mentally scrolling through the plots of the application of his abilities in practice, in operational affairs, in order to thereby achieve a pardon for this, no

longer young, but who somehow became close to him. And the former accused, sitting in a hard folding chair, closing his eyes, thought about the vicissitudes of fate and that he had agreed to the major for voluntary service in counterintelligence. He still had doubts about his rightness in going over to the side of the Soviets, but remorse about the fact that he had replaced his former masters disappeared as soon as the shameful p

the last days of the Germans' stay in Smolensk during the retreat. And he asked himself, where is this vaunted German accuracy and the promises of the commandant about reliable means of evacuation ?!

The Germans kept the time of the withdrawal of troops a secret. They left Smolensk unexpectedly, in the evening, under the roar of bombs and the howl of shells. At night they lost their way, the lead car was hopelessly stuck in a swamp, the engine of the second one failed. We walked along the country road. The group of fugitives - no more than twelve people - from the very first steps began to spread, split into separate groups. The first to leave were the three healthiest and youngest men: they silently threw their unnecessary suitcases, put on their backpacks and, without a word, turned off the country road into the forest, dissolving into it. They served in the city police - they already knew what threatened them when they met with Soviet troops. Then the former accountant of the Smolensk council imperceptibly lagged behind and disappeared from sight. The only elderly married couple - both teachers from Zemstvo times - remained in the forestry. The main core of the group continued to move west in the hope of avoiding a meeting with the Red Star troops, "Enkavedeshniki" and frightening retribution. There was only one goal - to go to the only highway in these places, going towards Minsk, and to join the retreating German troops.

I recalled Sievers and the editor of the occupational newspaper Russky Golos, Buinov, a former freelance correspondent for the Smolenskaya Pravda newspaper, an excellent storyteller who knew many stories about his region. He often ran to the light of Sievers and enthusiastically talked about local events, about the noble personalities of the Soviet period and various legends about their leadership style, habits in everyday life and in the service. It was he who told him the mournful story of the 1930s about the construction of the Moscow-Minsk highway. Senior Major Nasedkin[48] , a former regional chief from Tula, was then appointed the new regional head of the NKVD . At the same time, repressions began throughout the country. About seven thousand Latvians lived on the territory of the region, who moved here at different times - especially many Courland residents expressed a desire to move to our region during the imperialist war, when the Germans were near Riga, and the tsarist government financially helped the refugees. Thus, the Latvian colony was formed in the Smolensk region. They are workers

were excellent - honest and teetotal. The construction was entrusted to Gushosdor[49] and Nasedkin was fully responsible for the construction of the highway. The recruitment of civilian diggers failed; paid very little for construction. Then Nasedkin went to Moscow and, under the pretext of strengthening the western border, received permission to repress the adult population of Latvians, since they come from a hostile bourgeois state and, potentially, enemies of the Soviet regime! He also included here the ministers of worship and laity who actively attend churches, as well as criminals of various stripes. There were more than ten thousand of them - they were convicted and thrown into the construction of the Minsk highway. Nasedkin, for the shock performance of a government task, was first awarded, and then received a promotion - he was appointed People's

Commissar of Forced Belarus. It was to this highway that a group of German fugitives was heading, among whom was Sievers, when they were taken prisoner by a tank battalion of the Red Army with an infantry landing. They were betrayed not only by urban clothes, but also by an elderly fat man who served under the occupiers as the head of the people's house. Deciding to immediately confess, he stood aside, next to a young officer, pointing his finger at the fugitives and enthusiastically telling him something. The soldiers were mostly young men in mud-stained raincoats, boots with windings and wrinkled field epaulettes. Sievers then was not afraid of this meeting: for the first time he saw the faces of the sons of those who pushed him out of his home. And they regarded the fugitives with curiosity and frank contempt. Then they were searched. In war, all soldiers are the same in terms of captured trophies - they consider themselves the only stewards of their things and lives. As a result, all the fugitives lost watches, rings, razors, cigarette cases, lighters, wallets and other small things. A tall Caucasian, overgrown with black bristles, a little embarrassed, took away from Sievers a pocket watch, a dressing case and a deck of cards in a leather case. The senior lieutenant, the political instructor of the landing company, did not allow another group of soldiers to conduct a second search and, with the words "they don't shear a sheep twice in a row," drove them away. As a token of gratitude, Sievers presented him with a self-writing pen.

Lefortovo prison, with boorish evasions, under the pretext of a search, he was robbed by a small fry from the supervisory staff.

Moreover, he prayed for those soldiers who took him prisoner: others were even more unlucky. So, at the entrance to the village, where they were taken under escort to the assembly point, he saw those three who were the first to leave the group. They lay prone in a ditch, next to them their gutted backpacks. On brown, with yellow straps, Sievers identified one of the three, still alive and healthy yesterday, but now not buried, lying in this fine autumn rain. Somewhere on the edge of the village, bringing out something cheerful, an accordion was playing. Life went on as usual: someone had a short fun, and someone was lying in a ditch, bending his legs. The fate of these three unfortunates haunted him. Who disposed of their lives - no one will know now. Yes, and how was he to know that the departure of the Germans gave rise to outright banditry, pseudo-partisanism among the former policemen and various dark personalities who joined them. Armed, they huddled in flocks, robbed and killed everyone who met on the way.

The new ones were brought in and locked in a cold barn until the next day. Still there, in the barn, on a cold September night, Sievers bitterly realized his uselessness in this world, and therefore, during the investigation, he did not even try to look for a loophole to justify his service with the invaders and, without regret, prepared for the highest measure or "quarter" hard labor, which was almost the same, with an addition to his fifty-four years. And, not tormented by the fear of disappearing, he prepared himself for the worst. Sievers took the meeting with Kurakin as a sign of fate, although the offer to help them and act as a whistleblower of those with whom he had recently met, he sat at the same table, with whom he received occupation stamps together, was painfully difficult. His whole being protested against such a proposal. Brought up in a classical gymnasium, where philosophizing and fiscalism were despised, he was horrified by the role that Kurakin was preparing for him, and assured that by nature he was not a hunter and he might develop sympathy for the oppressed and persecuted. Kurakin, also a schoolboy in the past, familiar with the code of honor of the then youth, patiently and persistently conducted his conversations, undermining the old romanticism of Sievers. And then he introduced the former adviser to

search cases against former henchmen of the Abwehr, police, field gendarmerie, where materials were collected about hundreds of tortured, killed, mass executions in the villages because many were dissatisfied with the established order, arbitrariness emanating from the occupation authorities or their accomplices. And Sievers began to listen to his interlocutor in a different way, discovering that he showed sympathy for the unfortunate victims. Kurakin understood the state of mind of his hostage and, without any pressure, gradually introduced him to reliable information about the black deeds of the punishers.

Previously, Sievers believed that the underground forces of the Soviet of Deputies would soon run out of steam, having no support among the population. But he was mistaken in his assumptions, and not only he! All the authorities of the "new" order did not take into account a lot - they miscalculated! They believed that, having suffered from civil war, collectivization, and ferocious repressions, the people of this country, who did not love their own power and obeyed only its power, would show humility and consent to the new order. However, the people looked closely at them for a long time and realized that horseradish is not sweeter than a radish, and decided that they would live, albeit bitter, but with their own radish. And when the military fortune smiled on the Soviets, and, having risen almost from their knees, their army began to slowly but steadily push the invaders, then, of course, sympathies were already on the side, although not beloved, but of

their own power! And the Red Army, after all, was not a stranger to them - from almost every family, someone served in it. Although in the depths of the people there were those who did not even think of putting up with the Soviet regime. They had different reasons to go against her: some hated the communists for their cruel power, party inclusiveness; others - for impudent bureaucratic leveling, beggarly wages and outright lies about a happy life in the country of labor; but most of all among them were those who suffered during dispossession, for alien class origins and for other sins against the new laws. Some of them voluntarily joined the ranks of the police, gendarmerie, punitive detachments and Sonderkommandos and let a lot of blood out of their fellow citizens; and now there was only one thing left - to go with the Germans to the end!

They knew that they would not do well when they met with the Red Army. It was rumo

police officers, punishers and active accomplices of the Germans to apply the April Decree of 1943 - execution by hanging. Sievers

did not sympathize with this: he was outraged by their cruelty and mercilessness towards the downtrodden and disenfranchised rural people, suffering from the exactions of the invaders, and at night from the partisans' bossing. His conscience told him that he, too, was an accomplice and, definitely, could have avoided service with the invaders, but voluntarily came, succumbing to the temptation of reasoning among his acquaintances about the creation of a new Russia with the help of the Germans. Sievers considered his coming to them the biggest mistake in his life! How he now wanted to repent, lay out everything that was in his soul, hear words of sympathy and cry, as in childhood at confession, with hot tears of repentance. But, alas, he was convinced that here, in the Soviet of Deputies (continuing to call it that way out of emigre habit), there was no place left for either the confessor or the very concept of repentance. And, looking at the young faces of fellow travelers officers - many of them were not even forty - he understood: they are new growth - pupils of the new government. They will not have doubts about the correctness of their chosen path, they will not know repentance, compassion. They believed in the triumph of communism, the solidarity of the working people, the genius of their Leader and the invincibility of their army! How easy it is for them! Without complicating their lives with the concepts of good and evil accumulated by mankind, they immediately canceled the content of the tangled age-old disputes; came to a clear and understandable thought - whoever is not with us is against us, and no hesitation! Simple and hassle free! Only those who agree with us survive - there is no place for others and there will be no place next to us! And all those who doubted and hesitated - they w

Sievers would not accept such a philosophy. Therefore, he had no envy of their freedom and well-being. They went their own way and were content with life, not knowing another. "I wonder," he thought, "if I opened up to them and confessed who I am? Most likely they would have thrown me out of the plane." But his guardian angel was nearby, he would not have allowed lynching! While still at the airfield, Sievers noticed how three senior officers looked meaningfully at Kurakin and his leather raglan without shoulder straps and whispered, expressing respect and deference on their faces. They knew that such a deviation from the uniform was allowed only to special officers no lower than a colonel

and generals. From the time of his arrest, the difficult imprisonment and the tedious investigation, Sievers saw around him only the indifferently hating looks of the guards, the guards, the investigators. Once or twice he caught a glimpse of something like an expression of pity in the eyes of the sentries. And only Kurakin at their first meeting looked at him with different eyes; they had sympathy.

Sievers glanced gratefully at his guardian, who was dozing back in his chair, and recalled the details of his last conversations with him. Kurakin was mainly interested in those responsible for the fight against partisans in the Smolensk region, and especially those who showed special zeal and distinguished themselves in service during the two years of occupation.

Now it seemed to Sievers that an eternity had passed since he began serving with the Germans, but he tangibly, to the smallest detail, remembered the events and the people around him. Yes, and how could one forget his arrival in half-burnt Smolensk in early September 1941 and those stupid dreams and hopes for the revival of a new Russia! Disappointment came later. Now it was painfully embarrassing to think about it! The autumn of the first year of the war

in Smolensk passed in alarm and unrest. At first, everyone happily waited for the fall of Moscow, and then rumors slowly spread about the temporary failures of the Wehrmacht near Moscow, and in confirmation, the echelons of the wounded were drawn to Poland, further to the Fatherland, where they solemnly, but with fear, met the heroes of the Eastern Front. An order was received from the high command to meet the echelons of the wounded with an orchestra and flowers at any time of the day. Even artificial flowers from East Prussia were delivered by plane. And the entire city community, consisting of a dozen elderly people, three disguised police officers, as well as the commandant, the mayor with his staff of subordinates, holding bouquets of fake flowers in their chilled hands, patiently portrayed a reverent meeting with the defenders of civilization from the Bolshevik barbarians, about which so the only newspaper of the occupied Smolensk wrote with inspiration. Somewhere in January. In 1942, the commandant had an extended meeting to develop measures to prevent the emerging resistance forces. Here, for the first time among representatives of the Abwehr, the Gestapo and the police, Sievers saw a slender young man with

very even hair parting. Almost everyone spoke German at the meeting, and only two high ranks from the guard detachments of the field gendarmerie - one Russian, the other Latvian - had interpreters. When we moved on to discussing the tactics of the Bolshevik underground, a young man, introduced by the commandant as a specialist in combating sabotage in transport, in very correct German, with a slight Slavic accent, briefly outlined the established facts of the legalization of the underground using private enterprise. And then he made a proposal: from now on, all newly organized enterprises, offices, retail outlets and entertainment establishments were to be checked by the police and registered at their location under the guarantee of local governments. And the issuance of passes - *ausweis* - should be carried out only according to the list accounting. Everyone present listened to him attentively. Then Sievers would meet the owner of this conspicuous, even parting, a smart, energetic youth, many times among the important people visiting the commandant. Who could have imagined that he would have a fatal meeting with him ahead! This young man, a specialist in the fight against partisans, interested Sievers in his independence and lack of servility to the ranks of the occupying authorities. At first I thought that this was a "specialist" from the Baltic Germans; then I learned that his surname Lisovetsky, a native of Eastern Poland, enjoys the patronage of the all-powerful Major Glyuknauz, with whom they often visited the commandant's office. When Sievers told Kurakin about the environment of the commandant, the major was most interested in the personality of Lisovetsky. They talked

about him for a long time, and Kurakin then filled several sheets of the notebook. The plane flew up to Smolensk at a low altitude, fearing a chance meeting with a "Messer" hunter. Outside the porthole, the loop of the

Dnieper flashed blued steel, and a few minutes later, under the wheels of the Douglas, the runway of the airfield near Krasnoye Selo rustled.

Chapter XXVII. COMPLETED THRESHOLD

Only Chief of Staff Lepin had the only large map of the entire front line of the division's defenses, with the line of contact with the enemy shaded in blue and marks of various numbers understandable only to staff officers. The highly experienced Lepin, having

received instructions from the army headquarters to prepare for the deployment of scouts, sternly warned his staff officers: not a single movement in this sector should betray any intentions on our part. All front-line soldiers had long known that the enemy's observation service was at a premium - those who distinguished themselves by special results of observations were immediately awarded with awards and vacations. As a rule, this service was conducted from equipped, safe places, with good optics. The Germans are such a people - neat and pedantic! At the battalion posts they had, basically, old-timers - corporals, corporals. Tenaciously and persistently they followed our "front end" and recorded in the log any changes on our side. They also had a special unit of signalers there - they, simultaneously with the observation, were eavesdropping on our telephone conversations at the forefront. Here we had to figure out how to deceive the enemy, prevent our intentions from

being discovered, divert his attention by false preparations for an offensive operation of local importance to improve our positions. Thus, a plan with the mysterious name "Aza" was born at the division headquarters. The head of the intelligence department - an inventor and an incorrigible romantic - suggested calling the distracting operation "Gypsy Aza", because he had heard about the skill of gypsies to divert attention, but Lepin left only "Aza" in the negotiations for convenience, and it was fixed. The executors of the operation, who were busy preparing the material base, were not privy to its true intentions and began to carry out the order. And now, a platoon of sappers, close to the front line, secretly, in a dense spruce forest, in a few days, without noise, dug into the ground a strong frame of a spacious

dugout with three spruce logs, skillfully disguised and engaged in interior decoration. Both the chief of staff and Sazonov examined the dugout from all sides, which Lepin called the blockhouse in the old fashioned way, and were satisfied. It was decided that a reconnaissance group would hide here before being thrown in and sappers would be placed to clear the passage and guards.

General Abakumov assertively, like a "Studebaker" with three driving bridges through a swamp, went to his goal: to create tactical intelligence in his department, to get the first results and the approval of the Supreme Commander as soon as possible.

The fact that the Supreme Commander gave his consent to the creation of tactical intelligence under the leadership of the Chekist bodies, the staff of the General Staff were aware of the details. Some of the freethinkers believed that this was an unnecessary undertaking, but no one spoke about it aloud, and at meetings and meetings they loudly approved this innovation.

The ambition of the chief special officer, who strove not only to be a detective, but to share the laurels of real victories with military generals on equal terms, not to get lost in their crowd and to distinguish himself as a general thinking about improving the army for a quick victory, could only be unraveled by the Supreme Commander himself and, chuckling in mustache, to judge that ambition, aimed at the good of the cause, must be supported, encouraged. And he supported, but refrained from encouraging, waiting for results. And General

Abakumov at that time instructed to collect reviews through agents and information about how officers and generals in units of the army in the field would react to his, as he considered, fruitful idea. And, accordingly, he himself personally looked through the memorandums from numerous undercover messages. But the front-line special officers knew, understood what their high authorities wanted, and made mostly positive reviews. But somehow, two other messages got mixed up in the stream of positive ratings. They came from the Special Departments, which were separated by hundreds of kilometers, but were identical in meaning. The General read them again. In terms of vocabulary and grammar, they were different, but the thought was the same in them - the special officers will fill themselves with bumps until they gain experience! And, besides, in one it is stated in detail how the interlocutor of the agent - the translator of the intelligence department of the mechanized corps, Senior Lieutenant Neumann -

He said that the Germans always had intelligence and counterintelligence in the Abwehr, and, perhaps, our command considered it necessary for convenience to combine these functions in one hand. "Look what a smart guy you found. It turns out that we copied this permutation from the Germans! the general thought caustically. And in a special oilcloth notebook, which served as a conduit book for investigating misconduct, he wrote down an order to the head of his secretariat: "Take Neumann into development for disclosing classified information." And for a long time after the war, the former military translator Neumann will be at the sight of the all-powerful authorities - for incurring the wrath of the head of Smersh with his statement. Only somewhere in the middle of the 50s will he be removed from operational records and released from Gebe's custody. And you can't understand the whole life because of what it was broken: they weren't accepted into the party, didn't get into the city council as a deputy, and grew old as a German language teacher in a library technical school ...

There is almost no one left who would remember the days when the Western Front arose, and the fate of its commander, the hero of the Spanish war, the skinhead General Pavlov; the chief of staff, with a military bearing, the handsome General Klimovsky and three other generals who were shot in the inner prison of Lubyanka by the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court "for cowardice, the collapse of command and control, unauthorized abandonment of positions." The owner of the Kremlin needed sacrifices in order to put on them his own blame for the defeat of the Red Army, for the miscalculations he himself had made in Soviet-German relations. Everyone thought it was a long time ago! And the memory of the innocently shot generals (after all, according to the party law "The leader is always right" in our state!) Was preserved only by relatives and relatives.

The warm sunny weather of the April days gave way to frosts and cloudy days. On one such cold morning, a large front-line army learned that their Western Front had become known as the 3rd Belorussian Front and acquired a new commander - General Chernyakhovsky. The order was taken into account. There was no joy and delight on this occasion among the front-line soldiers. But the work of political workers has increased. It was necessary to explain everything, explain that the new name of the front obliges everyone

to improve military affairs and political training! And, God forbid, if in political studies one of the soldiers could not answer the question of what positions Comrade Stalin currently holds: General Secretary of the CPSU (b), Chairman of the State Defense Committee, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, People's Commissar of Defense and Supreme Commander of the Red Army and Navy! The change in front commander was

remembered for the fact that it coincided with the improvement of front-line rations. The soldier's diet has become more solid due to American canned food. For an additional officer's ration, they once gave out several thick bars of very hard, slightly bitter-tasting overseas chocolate. Many have tried it for the first time in their lives. The new young, black-

browed commander at the very first meeting noted that the front headquarters knew little about the enemy's defense, and set the task of correcting the situation in a short time. General Abakumov had already

received the task of the Supreme Commander to assist Chernyakhovsky in collecting intelligence information and, in turn, instructed the chief special officer of the front to speed up intelligence activities on enemy territory. A wave of menacing instructions from above came, in turn, to Sazonov, demanding from him: speed up, complete, coordinate, report on time ... Now it turned out that all responsibility for the selection of the reconnaissance group, verification, transfer across the front fell on his department. The task of additional verification of the reconnaissance group was almost completed: four were all right, but the fifth, Sergeant Knyazhich, had questions. He himself explained that after the shell shock he did not remember how many days he had been in the medical battalion and when he was taken from there to the field hospital. But the answers were contradictory, and Sazonov, in order to eliminate all doubts, decided to identify Knyazhich among the personnel, where he had served before the shell shock.

Overcoming the latent unwillingness of his deputy to double-check Knyazhich, Dmitry Vasilyevich signed an order for Bondarev to be sent on a business trip to carry out identification. The military unit where, according to the documents, Knyazhich served, was in the neighboring army, about sixty kilometers away. Bondarev took with him as assistants

accommodating Sergeant Markin and with a displeased face got into a gig with a tarpaulin awning, sat down on a bunch of reeds and set off - to carry out the task. On the way, he was silent and kept thinking about the injustice of fate - to serve under such a stupid, politically short-sighted person as Sazonov. He didn't bother thinking about how he would carry out the task, because from the very beginning he believed that all this fuss with additional verification, identification was Sazonov's whim, his invention, and the business trip was invented by him in order to humiliate the major and subject him to traffic inconvenience. Bondarev was not adapted to operational work, which consisted of many routine tasks that required ordinary patience, quick reaction, good memory, a desire to learn as much as possible, accumulate this knowledge, keep it in memory and use it. But he did not possess any of these qualities. His service in the regional executive committee, communication with the leadership of the region, party mobilization in the army, the unexpected assignment of a major in the political department of the corps, and then the appointment to the Special Department completely turned his head and convinced him of the exclusivity of his person.

The unsuccessful outcome of the denunciation of Sazonov and the scolding arranged for him by Colonel Tumanov discouraged him, but not for long. Now he indulged in daydreams, imagining that suddenly he somehow got on a report to the Member of the Military Council of the Army, he listens attentively to him as a former political worker, asks many questions, wonders what shortcomings exist in the work of military counterintelligence at the division level, and he sensibly and convincingly reports that the special officers do not always make the right decisions due to the lack of experience and sufficient political training among the leadership. The general listens to him attentively, makes some notes in a notebook, then asks to back up his statement with concrete examples. And then Bondarev, after some hesitation, cites the behavior of his boss as an example and begins to list his misses in the service, explaining this by the narrowness of his political outlook and the lack of party principles. At the end of the conversation, the general gets up from the table, firmly shakes his hand, thanks him for the important political information and hints that in the near future

he will consider the promotion of Major Bondarev. His imagination did not go beyond these blissful fantasies, and he was carried away in his imagination to savor in every way how Tumanov and Sazonov would receive the news of his promotion and how they would envy his well-deserved promotion in the division.

On the second day, having wandered along the countless roads of the second echelon, the major and his assistant found the military unit where Knyazhich had once served. Assuming importance, Bondarev talked with the special officer of this unit. As it turned out, the company in which Knyazhich fought suffered heavy losses, and he left for a field hospital. If you interrogate the entire company and present a photograph for identification, it will take a long time, - and Alexei Mikhailovich, without thinking twice, entered into the protocol the testimony of several soldiers from the list of the company who allegedly identified Knyazhich, and from "their words" he wrote down that he was carrying service properly, then received a shell shock and was sent to the medical battalion. And, as Bondarev believed, this was enough to close the issue of additional verification of Knyazhich and not return to him again. If he had known what a time bomb he was laying under his own well-being and how he would later pay for this deceit, he would have punished his children and grandchildren not to do this. But quite pleased with himself and the fact that he had managed to circumvent Sazonov's order, he laid the identification protocols

Chapter XXVIII. FATAL MEETING

The training in the simple but deadly craft of an army intelligence officer ended, and Knyazhich and a group of his classmates arrived at the place of transfer across the front. They were hidden in a newly built dugout, and only at night, breaking up in pairs with sappers, they mastered the path to pass to the rear of the Germans. The place of transition was well chosen: the enemy's outposts, his paired patrols, and night patrols did not visit this corner, hoping for a heavily mine-strewn area between two nodes of their defense, hidden deep underground. The team of sappers, selected at the direction of Colonel Lepin, consisted of the most skilled. Each of them combined the qualities of a sharp-eyed tracker and a surgeon with iron nerves and steel endurance! The sappers knew that it was more difficult to find a mine, sometimes cunningly hidden in the ground and disguised with a bunch of grass, old foliage, bark, than to neutralize it. The "frog" mines were very dangerous: a careless movement - and with a slight pop it jumped out from under the feet and exploded at the level of the abdomen, smashing with fragments not only the one who touched it, but also those who were next to him.

He supervised the laying of the trail and was responsible for its wiring to the rear of the Germans, known throughout the N-th army, the only one in it then awarded the Order of Glory of three degrees - foreman Ibragim Sheykhmetov, from the Crimean Tatars, a born scout. About his ability to penetrate to the German dugouts at arm's length, to move silently through the forest, about the ability to see in the darkness of the night, the soldiers composed different stories. Maybe he really inherited from his ancestors, who raided from the Danube to the Don, the very intuition with which they guessed the weak points in the defense of their neighbors, learned about their ambushes in an unknown way and evaded the chase. They called him "lucky". Even at the beginning of the war, he led the army headquarters without losses, bypassing the coverage and pincers of enemy motorized infantry. The chief of staff put him at the head of the reconnaissance group, and he was really lucky. Sheykhmetov had a daring idea - to go

parallel course at a distance of two to three kilometers from the advanced enemy forces, which moved in the daytime along country roads. So the army headquarters with its economy managed to slip out of the deadly embrace and join the retreating units of the Red Army. Since then, Ibrahim was assigned to the intelligence department as an instructor for sorties behind enemy lines, but he refused the officer rank, citing illiteracy and inability to command people. He remained a foreman and was this

satisfied.

The reconnaissance group and sappers immediately recognized the commandership of Sergeant Sheikhametov for his fearless night attacks on the Germans, calm good disposition and readiness to help his neighbor. Slender and flexible, like a river reed, even in his hooded camouflage he looked handsome and courageous.

Sergeant Knyazhich still did not believe that in a few days the chain of his trials would end, and he repeated to himself a saving prayer. It seemed to him that an eternity had passed since he became a sergeant in the army of the state, to which he had his own special account. Every time when the June execution night in the Grodno prison came up in his memory, again and again a mortal resentment against those who violated the way of his peaceful life and declared a cruel hunt for his father and his friends just because they belonged to another class. He could not forgive those who shot his father on a hot night and pushed his son onto the path of serving the Germans! Yes, it was they, the Germans, who saved his life! The scales have swung in their favor! What was left for him to do? - Get cured, go underground and fight against them?! But the mere thought that he would have ended up with the Bolsheviks made him feverish!

Preparations were being made for crossing the front. The path of the passage was "run in" several times, all the turns, hollows, hillocks, ravines were memorized. They could crawl, walk, run over them with their eyes closed. In the evenings, the wind carried the smell of coffee from the nearest dugout, their pair patrol passes along its route nearby, and someone else's speech was occasionally heard. Everyone was already used to the fact that the enemy was nearby, but his habits, his strengths and weaknesses were studied, and he became known and understood by them, no longer representing the terrible

mysterious creature. They accepted him as part of the evil forces of nature, and he was not

afraid of them. Two days before the release of the reconnaissance group, Colonel Kurakin came to Sazonov in a dirt-stained Jeep, accompanied by an elderly civilian in an officer's uniform,

but without shoulder straps. Dmitry Vasilyevich was sincerely glad to see the colonel. They sat down at the table, and Kurakin introduced his companion to Sazonov. He got up from the table, smiled pleasantly, gracefully bowed his head in the old-fashioned bow and called himself: "Yan Benediktovich," and, after a pause, added: "Lukin." In his sixties, it was difficult for Sievers to get used to his new surname, but gradually he got used to it, as well as to his position in Smersh, the officer's uniform and the faces around him.

Sazonov liked everything about this man: the friendly look in his bright eyes, his smile, and that nod of his head. He reminded him of his childhood, school, a strict but beloved teacher of the Russian language, a former clerk from the cadet corps, stately, with a straight back and the same manner of greeting - bowing his head.

Lukin went out of the dugout for a walk, and Kurakin spoke in detail about his companion. The story of the former enemy adviser did not diminish Sazonov's sympathy for him, but, perhaps, on the contrary, he was imbued with respect for him when he learned of his agreement to cooperate with front-line

counterintelligence. Talking about the misadventures of Sievers, Kurakin concealed the details of his participation in his fate, did not begin to devote Sazonov to how he managed to literally snatch an important person under investigation from the tenacious hands of the Investigative Unit. The colonel was a man of the old school, and, accustomed to modesty, he kept silent about how he won the fight at the Lubyanka. Now Kurakin is busy with the materials of the check for the entire reconnaissance group. Sazonov gave him a swollen volume of observation files. Having read the final information on the case, like an experienced detective, he became interested in Knyazhich, carefully read page after page, occasionally making notes in a notebook. His face frowned, and instead of his usual friendly expression, he took on a worried expression. Dmitry Vasilyevich realized that he could not avoid a serious conversation with the colonel, and patiently waited for the denouement. But he did not expect that h

verification activities. To be honest, where did Sazonov get experience in such cases?! Yesterday's teacher, then an operative officer, who dusted his brains on short-term courses of special officers with primitive knowledge and learned this craft only in the practice of his colleagues, who were a cut below him in education, who relied mainly on their intuition and little worldly experience. Kurakin had his own intuition, based on university education. In addition, he also had experience in the verification work of front-line departments. Almost without difficulty, he discovered a discrepancy, a repetition of small details in the reports of informants and identification materials for Knyazhich. It seemed to him that the performer was doing everything to whitewash the person being checked, but due to his delicacy, he did not express his assumptions to Sazonov.

At the end of the day, Kurakin decided to check the readiness and combat state of the reconnaissance group. With difficulty they drove up the mangled bedrock and stopped two kilometers from the dugout. Along a narrow path through a spruce forest, Sazonov led the colonel and his companion in civilian clothes to the scouts' hideout, the inhabitants of which were sitting at the table waiting for supper. In the compartment, two lanterns shone faintly. According to the legend created, Sazonov announced that a quartermaster from the rear department of the front had come to them to revise the boiler room. contentment.

The scouts looked at Lukin with curiosity. He sat down with them at the table, questioning them, as was the custom of a quartermaster, about the quantity and quality of provisions. Jan Benediktovich learned this role a long time ago, improving the experience of communicating with front-line soldiers. A few minutes later, their stiffness in the presence of an unfamiliar face disappeared, and setting an example for each other, they began to ask questions themselves, and one of them even remembered how in their reserve regiment, when asked by one quartermaster chief whether they had enough of the prescribed ration, the soldiers answered: "Enough, even remains!" "Where do you put the

leftovers?" - "Let's eat!" Talking to them, Lukin painfully recalled for a long time where he had met one of the five young people sitting at the table, whose face seemed so familiar to him. "It can't be that fate has brought him here, to the camp of scouts," he thought. And not wanting to show his special interest, he did not meet his eyes.

And only once, when he uttered one phrase, Lukin immediately remembered Smolensk, the commandant's office, a young man with an even parting of his hair, his emphasized independence, lack of servility in dealing with high ranks of the occupying authorities and their respect for him. Even then, Jan Benediktovich noted and mentally praised his behavior. There is no other way with the Germans, otherwise they will push you around, despite the fact that they need you! And they will be treated on an equal footing if they see how a senior officer from the Abwehr is talking with respect to the owner of the parting, a young man, and, obeying herd behavior, will show courtesy and obsequiousness to both. Now he remembered his last name and Polish origin. Despite the fact that he was wearing a military uniform, epaulettes of a sergeant, a light stripe of a mustache and a crewcut of blond hair, one could easily recognize him as a Smolensk acquaintance. The place, which excluded their meeting, and its suddenness, could have shaken Sievers's certainty that this was Lisovetsky, but when their eyes suddenly met, they recognized each other. None of them gave themselves away! Sievers-Lukin even read in his eyes: "Do as you like, God be your judge." "It's like a duel," thought Jan Benediktovich, "only my pistol is loaded, and he is unarmed." He smiled calmly, as if hinting to him: "You don't have to worry, I won't betray you!" The romance of youthful years, noble education, where honor and dignity are above all, have affected! "Yes, and what an enemy you are to me, we are both under the blow of fate! I was lucky: I met the colonel, he freed me from hard labor, because I was not involved in the hellish kitchen and there is no blood on me, but they are diligently looking for you and eager to meet you! Expect no mercy from this workers' and peasants' state - their judgment is swift, you know this better than I do! I will take a sin on my soul in front of the colonel, I will not report to him about you. I believe that the "Smershevites" already have enough work. It's a pity for your youth, I'm sure you were forced to go to the service of the Germans only by fatal circumstances ..."- with such thoughts, Sievers said goodbye to everyone, not hoping to ever meet Lisovetsky.

On the way back, Kurakin was busy talking with Sazonov, and Jan Benediktovich silently thought about his act, feeling guilty before the colonel. An hour ago, he could have become a hero, would have been honored in the service and could have hoped for a pardon. But what

at the cost of killing a very young and somehow attractive person! "He is an enemy of the state and the system, to which I did not swear; but after all, the state does not always act humanely and imposes on itself a heavy burden - to dispose of a person's life, "he reasoned, justifying his misconduct before the colonel. And yet, as a deeply religious person, he was convinced of the inevitability of "I will repay."

Chapter XXIX. FLIGHT, OPERATION FAILURE AND PAYING

When the high authorities left the dugout, Sergeant Knyazhich took a deep breath. He recognized Sievers immediately and realized that the former adviser from Smolensk was in the service of counterintelligence. It tingled in the stomach with excitement. The thought flashed - why is he here ?! And, having suppressed excitement and fear, he again regained calm and prepared for the worst. Only once did their eyes meet, and Andrzej realized that the old Smolensk acquaintance would not betray him now. "He could be my father," the thought flashed through his mind, "and perhaps the person sitting opposite also thought: "This young man could be my son!" He saved me this minute, but what will happen in an hour, at night and tomorrow? Andrzej did not trust such impulses of someone else's soul and was not sure that Sievers would not betray him on the way in a conversation with special officers. After all, the

former adviser agreed to work for them not for beautiful eyes, but for some interest, and it is not known under what conditions. All this was familiar to him, and he himself used these methods more than once, engaging in the identification of the partisan underground. And with frank cynicism and a degree of contempt for himself, he thought: "Fate compensates: then I was a hunter, and now there is a hunt for me".

Sievers gave him a chance to escape, and he must take it! The main thing now is not to make mistakes, to think over and calculate everything to the smallest detail and run that very night.

After dinner, Sergeant Major Sheikhametov, as always, came to their compartment. In addition to the general guidance on laying the path and preventing the unmasking of the planned sortie, he was also assigned other duties: to monitor the internal climate of the group, to prevent quarrels, to reason with the hot and quarrelsome, but there were none. That evening he

was going to write a letter to his brother, who fought in the Baltic states, so he took the best kerosene lantern and sat down in his compartment, curtaining the doorway with a raincoat. For him, writing was a difficult occupation - letters were not enough - and he

wrote the letter aloud and did not want others to know about his weakness.
Passing

by the compartment, Andrzej heard how the foreman in an undertone ordered his brother to take care of himself, not to forget his parents and his sisters, who remained in the Crimea, in the sparsely populated place Ak-Mechet. He could not even imagine then that on May 9, 1944, Sevastopol would finally be taken with battles, and a few days later, by a closed Decree of the Supreme Council, the indigenous population of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars - and there were several hundred thousand of them - would be evicted to the Central Asian republics. True, they went under escort in warm weather, but the North Caucasian peoples and Kalmyks were less fortunate - they were transported in February, when the guards in sheepskin coats and sheepskin coats were shaking from the cold on the brake pads, and the guards froze to death in the through-blown freight

cars ... In the Sheikhametov family two sisters were married to Russians. The head of the NKVD, who ordered the eviction in their village, said: "If your husbands love you, they will come to you - they are not subject to expulsion. They can only do it voluntarily!" And so it happened - both of them, having won, went to their wives and children in voluntary exile. The foreman Sheykhametov was also to be removed from service and sent there, according to the stage ... But the foreman was the favorite of General Boyko, besides, a hero of the front, with three Orders of Glory. He was miraculously defended, and only a year later, from near Koenigsberg, he was demobilized and went to his relatives.

All this will happen later, and now he, satisfied that he managed to cope with the scribbling of his brother, made himself felt and ordered him to remember his parents, went to rest in his

compartment. Andrzej. patiently waited for the time when all his "classmates" fell sound asleep. Then he got up and listened: there was silence in the dugout. A young communications soldier with a telephone receiver in his hands was dozing, his head on his chest. It remained to pass the outer double post. All the inhabitants of the dugout went to the closet, knocked together from birch poles. It was necessary to go to him along the path, past the outer post. When his eyes got used to the darkness, Andrzej saw the firefly of the cigarette and both soldiers standing on the path leading to the whitening house. He calculated everything in advance: in a few minutes another couple will replace them, so we must go now, and, having app

wait for them to be replaced, then take a little to the right and go to the path leading to the front line.

Slamming the door a little, so as not to frighten the guards with an unexpected appearance, in an overcoat thrown over his shoulders, he walked past them without stopping. A few minutes later, without any delay, the old shift of guards went to rest, and the new couple, talking in low voices, moved away from his hiding place. Now the path

was clear. The plan for ensuring the operation "Aza" provided for a secret night post near the cleared path in case the German military intelligence came to our rear. Andrzej accidentally heard about this from the sappers, with whom his group ran around the path of the passage, but did not know where the post was. Saying a prayer, full of determination, he went out onto the path, carefully checking his path according to the signs. Now he regretted that he remembered only those that served as a guide for turns. His eyes got used to the darkness, but sometimes Andrzej lost the direction of the path, then carefully stepped back and again moved on his knees. The first hundred meters almost crawled. The sappers called this area productive - it was densely stuffed with mines. Andrzej was sweating from the tension; taking off his overcoat, he made a roll out of it, hung it over his shoulder and, again on all fours, continued on his way.

The first time he made a mistake was when he deviated from the path a few meters to the side and, carefully rummaging through the old grass, touched a mine. They put her in the first snow, and now, when the snow has melted, she lay down in the old grass. Andrzej just touched its cold ebonite surface and managed to withdraw his hand - fear pierced him like an arrow, sweat flooded his eyes, his hands shook and an irrepressible trembling pounded his whole body. So close to your fatal end and feel death with your own hands! He knew that a mine explosion did not always kill a soldier, but, imagining how, bleeding, with unbearable pain in a crippled body, he would slowly die, he forced to suppress his panic fear, which lasted several minutes and, straining his eyesight, began to feel hands on the ground and again found new mines. It seemed to him that he had fallen into a vicious circle and there was no way out - silent enemies were lying around, they were waiting for Andrzej to inadvertently step on, put pressure on the box and - then everything was gone!

It seemed like an eternity had passed. Time passed, but he could not crawl out onto the path. Then Andrzej forced himself to stop and for a few minutes he remembered how and when he turned off the path. Then again and again he crawled in a circle, not finding the way to the saving path.

Time passed, and more and more thoughts came: what if someone finds out his absence, they immediately organize a search and, first of all, go looking along the path to the front line. It was then, while he was poking in all directions, like a blind puppy, they caught him. He imagined the commotion in the dugout and those who would look for it. But among those who remained there, on the other side, there were none so skillful and desperate as to walk along the path into the night, where every step to the side is like suicide. All of them will wait for the dawn. This means that he still has time to get out of the trap into which he himself fell.

Suddenly he remembered Sergeant Major Sheikhametov. Yes, this one can go into the night along a dangerous path. Only he, with his bestial caution and weightlessness of a light body, could quickly and silently catch up with the fugitive. Andrzej imagined how he would be seized here, sitting surrounded by a minefield, and forced to walk with his hands up, and then drink a cup of bullying, nightly interrogations, and then a bullet in the back of his head! Everything in him spoke against such a terrible end, and for the hundredth time he felt the enchanted circle. Finally found a way out on the path and now began to carefully move forward. Andrzej crawled over a few hundred meters of the way, but suddenly he heard an extraneous sound, which either subsided or intensified rhythmically to human breathing. As he crawled closer, he realized that it was the snoring of a sleeping man. Under the rhizome of a century-old uprooted spruce, which lay not far from the path, the first secret post rested comfortably. Nobody checked them, and they did not believe that the Germans could pass here in the minefield at night, and therefore they arranged a comfortable bed; fell asleep in the evening. Now, from the fallen

spruce, it was a stone's throw to the guard path of the Wehrmacht soldiers guarding the approaches to their dugouts, bunkers hidden along the clearing in the forest. Sheikhametov

woke up with a feeling of anxiety even when the fugitive was wandering along the path, bumping into mines. He took a lantern and went to the sleeping scouts - only Knyazhich was not among them. He quickly walked around all the compartments, then the surroundings of the dugout, and his sharp-sighted

the eye could detect the footprint of a boot and the trampled grass at the start of the path leading to the leading edge. The foreman could not understand one thing, how could a man like Knyazhich risk going out on the trail at night and what could make him take a mortal

risk ?! He did not announce a general alarm, did not call Sazonov, and, taking a Mauser with him, disappeared into the predawn darkness. The foreman knew the transition path best of all and could walk along it with his eyes closed without deviating a single step. Flexible and light on the foot, he glided like a disembodied shadow along the path and was sure that he would catch up with the fugitive, but his efforts were in vain. They were separated by no more than a hundred meters, when suddenly ahead the hoarse, barking voice of a German patrolman, like a shot, sounded in the silence of the forest: "Halt! Hyundai hoh!" The foreman froze at first, and then quickly crawled towards the voices; a powerful beam in front of him highlighted Knyazhich, who was standing, without a cap, with a roll on his shoulder. A lanky "Fritz" emerged from the darkness, rested his machine gun against Knyazhich's stomach and searched him with one hand. Then the light went out, and the patrolmen, talking to

Knyazhich in German, disappeared into the darkness. Ibrahim did not have time to prepare for firing when a German lantern flared up and illuminated Knyazhich for a short moment, the foreman was not sure that his first shot would reach the target, otherwise the patrolmen would open fire and then it is not known whether he would have survived from the fire of two machine guns.

It was under such circumstances that betrayal with aggravating circumstances unexpectedly opened up, and, like a snowfall, it should have given rise to an avalanche of formidable consequences.

The limited circle of the heads of the Smersh front department knew that this operation, insignificant in complexity and scale, was a prologue to the creation of a new function of their department - tactical intelligence, and was conceived by their chief - General Abakumov. It was early morning, and Sazonov and

Kurakin were in hot pursuit.

conducted an inquiry.

The initial survey of everyone who was in the dugout: sentries, patrolmen - did not give anything intelligible. There were no clues indicating that Knyazhich was preparing to escape. Realizing the importance of what had happened, Kurakin reported via closed communication

to your management about the incident. The head of the front department "Smersh" warned Kurakin: do not stick out the version of Knyazhich's betrayal and consider that he got lost at night, accidentally went to the front line and was captured by the German patrol. And in order to soften the anger of the high authorities, it was decided to send the results of the investigation as late as possible, when the acuteness of the perception of what happened had already

passed. Everyone understood that if General Abakumov found out about the true reason for the failure of the operation, then the special officers would not escape a devastating order from their department. The most unpleasant thing for the leadership of the "Smersh" front is to fall out of favor with the almighty chief of counterintelligence. Then farewell to awards, business trips to the rear for recreation, distribution of trophy property and other benefits! Sazonov, as a representative of the middle link of the career ladder, did not get even a part of these bounties, but he was obliged to be responsible as a performer for the personal selection of the reconnaissance group, its verification and transfer to the rear of the enemy. And now everything has turned against him! He was depressed by what had happened and once again convinced that the

marauder soldier who came to him in a dream with stolen money was a harbinger of trouble for him. Now everything depended on how and where Kurakin would direct the investigation. For Sazonov, it could have ended in removal from office and demoted to junior officers. Anxious days of investigation began. The colonel wanted to establish why Knyazhich defected to the Germans on that very night, after their arrival with Sazonov and meeting with Lukin. And he, in turn, very embarrassed, told Kurakin about his doubts about the similarity of Knyazhich with Lisovetsky. The colonel did not want to cast a shadow on his ward, brought him out from under the blow and focused on the materials of the special check of Knyazhich, while having his own opinion. Gradually, step by step, he more and more clearly understood Bondarev's guilt: his forgeries on behalf of informants and a written forgery when he was engaged in identifying Knyazhich at his former place of service. Kurakin asked the investigator for help, and interrogations began. At first, Bondarev fidgeted, not wanting to admit his guilt, then he wanted to shift everything onto Sazonov, shielding himself with his

awareness of his guilt and convinced that a sincere confession would be taken into account and counted in his favor.

Soon the case was completed and sent to the tribunal with the accusation of the former deputy head of the Special Department of abuse of office and official forgery. The division's prosecutor authorized the arrest, and the department's party bureau expelled him from the party. When they came to chief commander Kuzakov to get permission to expel communist Bondarev from the party, he fiddled with his registration card for a long time and, remembering the secret agreement with Bondarev, the expectation that their efforts would really help him, the head of the political department, become the first person in the division commander, at the same time, pushing aside the influential chief of staff, Colonel Lepin, and the way he humiliated himself in front of Kovalev when he was confronted with Bondarev, aloud he honored his former associate with one phrase: "This is how this adventurer should be!"

In Sazonov's department, they only gossiped about Bondarev's fault, and no one, except for the elderly orderly, took pity on him! He, the only one, secretly prayed that everything would end well for God's servant Alexei! Bondarev himself, all drooping from the misfortune that had fallen on him and swollen from tears, sat in the dugout without getting out.

No matter how much Kurakin put off his report to the leadership about the failure of the intelligence operation, he was forced to draw up a certificate and indicate the true reasons for the failure and devoted a whole paragraph to Major Bondarev, where it was succinctly, in a military way, that he, embarking on the path of deception, was engaged in falsifying operational information, thus grossly violating the military oath and the current orders of Smersh. His guilt is fully established, and the case is referred to the tribunal. According to strict KGB traditions, it was also proposed to issue a severe reprimand to Major Sazonov for weak control in working with subordinates and warn him about incomplete official compliance!

As expected, before sending such a document to the leadership, the colonel acquainted Sazonov with its content and, looking at him with his intelligent eyes, comfortingly explained that in two or three months everything would calm down, be forgotten, and the reprimand would be removed. In the meantime, you need to work without grumbling and resentment! Dmitry Vasilyevich agreed with his words,

realizing that the other in place of Kurakin, in order to show exactingness to the authorities, could have driven him, together with Bondarev, to the tribunal! But the colonel acted fairly - everyone got what they deserved.

The complete liberation of the occupied territory of the western regions was approaching - stubborn battles loomed in a foggy haze beyond the Carpathians; the opening of a second front by our allies in Europe was expected from day to day.

The Headquarters hurried with the liberation of the occupied territory in order to be in time with the sowing work, ordered that punitive measures be taken against the OUN underground as soon as possible. In connection with the entry into the lands of other states, instructions were already prepared to identify German agents left to commit sabotage, to filter all fellow citizens who found themselves on the territory of neighboring states, to arrest active collaborators from among foreigners and to provide assistance to pro-Soviet-minded elements. There was a lot of work to be done - and the punishing KGB sword had to be sharp and smashing! All these events distracted General

Abakumov from interfering in the story with Knyazhich: fears that there would be a lot of bloodletting for the failure of the operation were not confirmed, and everything ended in little bloodshed. Bondarev was sent to a penal battalion for a period of one month. The last time Sazonov saw him before being sent to the tribunal, when, accompanied by an armed soldier, he left the dugout and got into the wagon. A face crumpled from experiences and an overcoat carelessly thrown over his shoulders with a torn off strap aroused pity in Dmitry Vasilyevich. He approached him, shook hands with him, said a few words of encouragement, but he only stared blankly at his feet and, sighing heavily, did not even dignify him with an answer.

It so happened that with the arrival of a representative of the Headquarters at the headquarters of the 3rd Belorussian Front, the command decided to conduct reconnaissance in battle using penalized boxes. Dawn had just dawned, and artillery preparation had already begun. The cannonade of our guns of all calibers stunned the penalists sitting in the trench. Shells flew over their heads into the hazy darkness. Then suddenly behind them, in the woods, rocket-propelled mortars blazed with a howl. Everyone sat on their knees, depressed by the upcoming fight with the enemy.

artillery preparation began mortar shelling of a large field lying in front of them with a copse, beyond which a terrible unknown awaited them. When the mines began to cover the full width of the field with black-and-red explosions, along which they were to pass under fire to the first German trench, Bondarev's neighbor, an experienced front-line soldier who got here for beating a patrol squad, listened to the explosions of mines and shouted into Bondarev's ear: "Listen, Alexei, how the explosions double! But he did not understand the meaning of his cry and remained squatting, convulsively clutching a rifle in his hands.

The command knew that the field was mined. Two days before this, an attempt was made to remove the mines and make passages, but then they abandoned this, explaining the refusal as an unmasking factor in the upcoming operation. And with the consent of the representative of the Headquarters, it was decided to subject the field to mortar fire, thereby, as the sapper-engineering service authoritatively asserted with their calculations, this obstacle would be eliminated during the battle in a few minutes.

The commanders responsible for this operation, just in case, pulled up a barrage detachment of the NKVD troops and placed it back to back, behind the penal units. The detachment took up position; he put up large-caliber DShKs on tripods, camouflaged them along with heavy machine guns and waited for the command to open fire on the retreating. Everyone knew that fines would go on the attack here, and in them - people who were guilty before the law, the command and the country! All of them are condemned by the tribunal and must wash away their guilt with blood! Therefore, what other conditions could be created for them for an offensive - they were already given the opportunity to fight with weapons in their hands and were honored to be the first to shed blood for their homeland and for Comrade Stalin! And no one took pity on them, although they were yesterday's friends - brothers-in-arms! The soulless political apparatus brought up everyone in the belief that all convicts were criminals, and they were treated accordingly - as enemies of the peoples.

The mortar shelling of the field continued. With a close hit, anti-personnel mines detonated, exploded, and only the old warriors could hear the double sound of the explosion. But Bondarev did not understand what his neighbor was shouting about, and was in a state close to fainting. The commanders understood the state of the newcomers and knew that the only way to get them out of their stupor was with a kick or a blow from the ramrod b

Alexei Mikhailovich did not hear the company officer's boisterous whistle and was lifted up from his knees with a kick in the behind. But, having risen, he still hesitated to get out onto the parapet; having received a burning blow with a ramrod on the buttocks, he jumped out of the trench behind his neighbor and, not seeing anything in front of him for fear, holding his rifle in front of him, walked in the chains of the advancing straight through the birch copse.

It was difficult to hide the preparation of the operation from the enemy. The Germans expected and were ready to repel the attack. One of the surprises is the mortar shelling of the advancing chains in the copse. Mines exploded at the top, barely touching the tops of the trees, hitting all living things for tens of meters around! Bondarev

was suddenly hit with something hot above the elbow in his left hand, with which he was holding the fore-end of the rifle. And she suddenly began to fall out of her right hand. Then he wanted to pick up the rifle with his left again, but with horror he saw a bloody stump instead of it and fell to the ground, having lost his senses. Bondarev woke up in the medical battalion from unbearable pain. Someone tightly pulled the forearm of the same left arm with a tourniquet, the pitiful remnant of which was still bleeding, and the cut bone was visible from the flesh. From the piercing pain and what he saw, he again fell into oblivion and came to his senses later, when the woman surgeon told someone over him: "Prepare serum and blood," and she herself began to conjure over the rest of his arm. So for Bondarev ended the war and military service.

He was treated for a long time in the rear hospital near Moscow. During this time, his criminal record was removed, the rank of major was returned and he was awarded the Order of the Patriotic War of the 2nd degree. Then an order came - to send senior officers for additional rest to a sanatorium, where his wife came to visit him twice. And in May forty-fifth, Alexei Mikhailovich was commissioned. With an officer's

suitcase in his right hand and an empty left sleeve of his tunic, with an order and a golden block of a severe wound, Bondarev arrived in his native city. May of that year was fertile for those returning from the front: wherever they appeared, they were met, hugged, kissed, as if they were the closest, invited to the table, treated! Alexei Mikhailovich even got the confidence that he had never been under the tribunal, and participation in the battle as a penalty box was not with him, but with someone else!

Years have passed. In his native city, on all solemn official holidays, he was seated on the presidium. The injury favorably distinguished Bondarev from other participants in the war, and he did not regret at all that he had lost his arm. And with his surviving right hand, as before, he sorted through papers, wrote certificates, resolutions, and the employees of his department for the preservation of state secrets were proud of him.

INSTEAD OF EPILOGUE

From the moment the war ended for Bondarev, for many others it lasted for another whole year.

Ahead was still the Belarusian operation, which went down in history under the code name "Bagration". The division, in which the characters of this story served, distinguished themselves in battle and received the honorary title of "Orsha". Even before the offensive, its chief of staff, Colonel Lepin, sent a report to the appropriate authority containing practical proposals on tactics for overcoming the enemy's defenses, and especially in the area of the main support, where the Center group tried to inflict heavy damage on our troops and stop the offensive. As a former participant in the failed East Prussian operation of 1914, Lepin

pointed to the unshakable Prussian heritage of defensive tactics, as well as their sapper and engineering traditions. During the operation "Bagration" he was appointed chief of staff of the army. When Koenigsberg was taken, he was awarded the rank of general. Then moving to the Far East, where the battles with the Kwantung Army were coming. After the surrender of Japan, General Lepin served in the Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Far East; then he worked for a long time at the Institute of Military History. But Major Sazonov was demobilized near Koenigsberg by decree on the return of the teaching staff to the national economy.

Returning to his homeland, in a small town in the Kalinin region, he began working as a director of a secondary school. The fugitive Lisovetsky, who gradually came to his senses with the Germans in a deep dugout, could be checked for a long time and with predilection, not trusting as a defector. But the password

he named, which belonged to Major Gluknauz, was confirmed half an hour later by the nearest headquarters. And after three hours on a motorcycle along country roads, he personally met the major, as always smart, still retaining the gloss of a staff officer. Then there was a trip with the bride to Grodno - everything was already empty there: the old judge Joseph died

Zagursky and Aunt Rosalina. Moreover, the Abwehr managed to send him with a special assignment also to Yugoslavia as a "specialist" in the fight against partisans, but by this time the fighting had already begun on the border of the Reich, and the defeat and complete surrender of Nazi Germany soon followed. He was dragged out of an American POW camp by a representative of Mikolajczyk's government. And only in 1947, the Polish community from Chicago helped him move to America. He settled in there, learned the language, completed courses funded by the community, and edits a Polish magazine, remembering his past like a bad dream.

October 28, 2000
Moscow - Klyazma

Illustrations



Guards Private Baranov. 1944



SMERSH employee certificate.

Энз. № 2868

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ КОМИТЕТ ОБОРОНЫ

ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ № ГКО—187/сс

От 17 июля 1941 г.

Москва, Кремль

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ: О преобразовании органов 3-го Управления в Особые Отделы.

1. Преобразовать органы 3-го Управления как в Действующей армии, так и в военных округах от отделений в дивизиях и выше в Особые Отделы, а 3-е Управление — в Управление Особых Отделов.
2. Подчинить Управление Особых Отделов и Особые Отделы Народному Комисариату Внутренних Дел, а уполномоченного Особотдела в полку и Особотдел в дивизии одновременно подчинить соответственно комиссару полка и комиссару дивизии.
3. Главной задачей Особых Отделов на период войны считать решительную борьбу с шпионажем и предательством в частях Красной Армии и ликвидацию дезертирства в непосредственно прифронтовой полосе.
4. Дать Особым Отделам право ареста дезертиров, а в необходимых случаях и расстрела их на месте.
5. Обязать НКВД дать в распоряжение Особых Отделов необходимые вооруженные отряды из войск НКВД.
6. Обязать начальников охраны тыла иметь прямую связь с Особыми Отделами и оказывать им всяческую поддержку.

Председатель Государственного Комитета Обороны

И. СТАЛИН.

Центральная типография НКВ СССР имени Кавча Ворошилова.
Москва, ул. Маркса и Энгельса, 17.

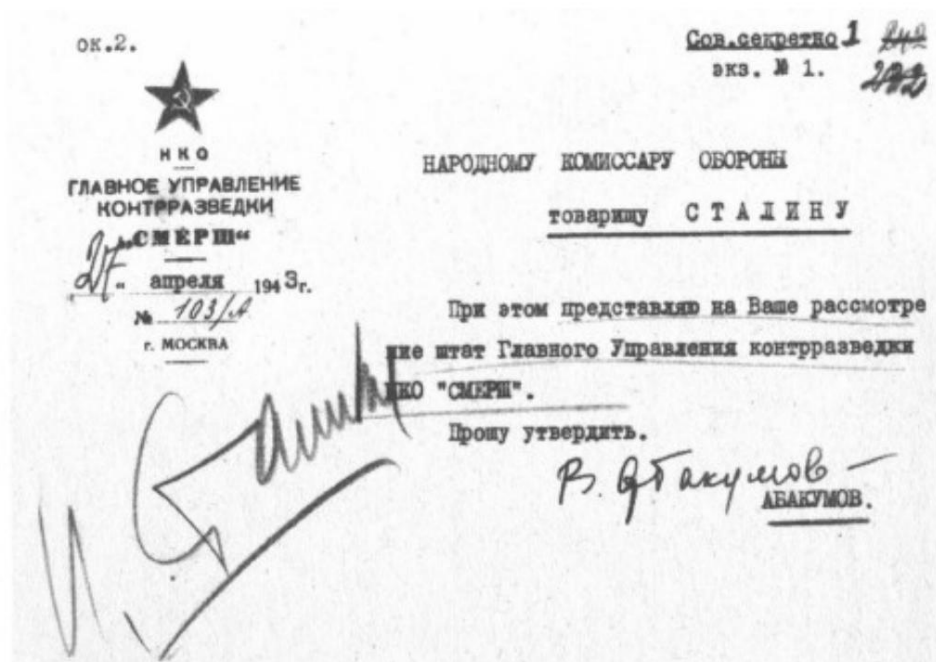
Decree of the GKO on the creation of Special Departments of the NKVD.



Officers of one of the departments of military counterintelligence
"SMERSH". 1943



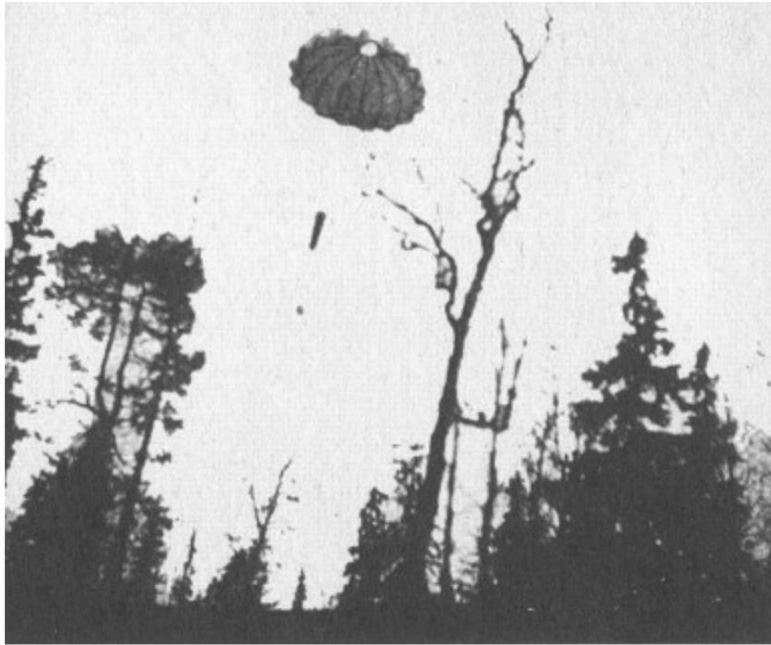
Employees of one of the departments of military counterintelligence
"SMERSH". 1943



Memorandum addressed to I.V. Stalin on the approval of the staff of the Main Directorate of Counterintelligence "SMERSH". 1943



Poster by artist P. Maltsev "Ruthlessly destroy fascist saboteurs."



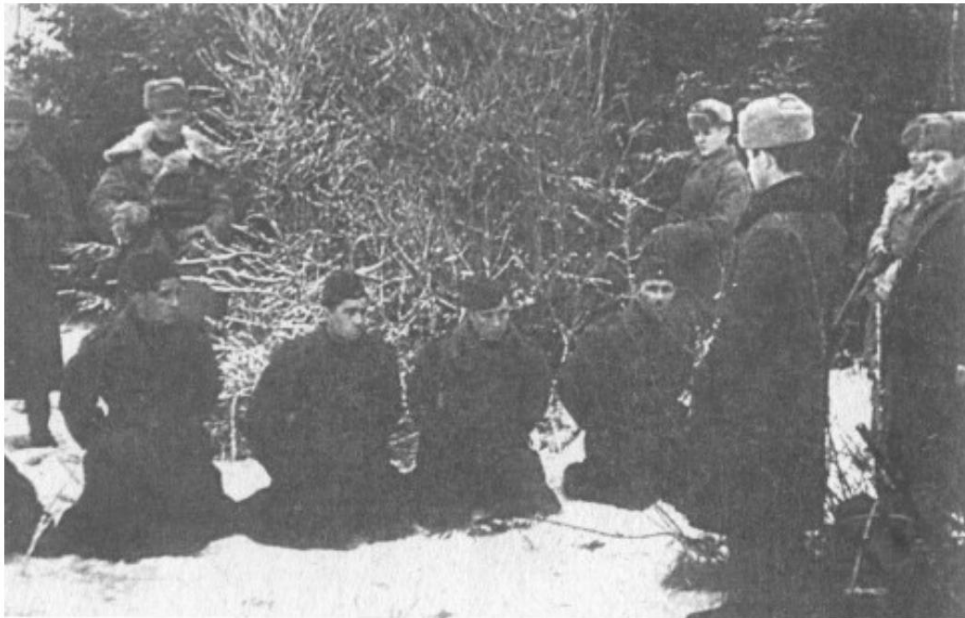
Dropping a cargo container with weapons for a German reconnaissance and sabotage group. 1942



Landing of the German reconnaissance and sabotage group in the rear of the Red Army. 1942



At the collection point.



Detention of a German reconnaissance and sabotage group by SMERSH officers.



Interrogation of a captured German officer. 1942



The German reconnaissance and sabotage group is put forward on a mission after landing in the rear of the Red Army. 1942



Lieutenant Colonel Baranov is an employee of the State Security Committee. 1970s

notes

Notes

1

GlavPU - Main Political Directorate
Peasant Red Army.

2

"Smersh" - the name of the Soviet military counterintelligence in 1943-1945 (short for "Death to Spies").

3

Art. 95 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR (old Code) on liability for giving false testimony or refusal to testify.

4

SVGK - Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

5

Abwehr - military intelligence of the German armed forces.

6

The Meks are Mensheviks. This was the name of a part of the Social Democratic Party after its split under the leadership of Plekhanov, Martov, Zasulich.

7

PNSh - Assistant Chief of Staff of the Regiment for Personal Accounting
composition.

8

RPD - Degtyarev light machine gun.

9

"Asterisk" - Order of the Red Star.

10

PFL - field filtration camp, where they were tested mostly former prisoners of war of the Red Army.

eleven

VNOS - units of air surveillance, warning and communications as part of the air defense forces.

12

SPO - secret political department until 1946; then, as part of the MGB of the USSR, it was called the 5th Directorate until 1954, when the KGB was organized; under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, it existed as the 4th department until 1961, but was liquidated and restored as the 5th department of the KGB only in 1967, under Yu.V. Andropov.

13

Tsyrik - warrior, soldier (***Mong.***).

14

"ZBZ" - medal "For military merit" (front).

15

GKO - State Defense Committee, established in July 1941.

16

PFS - food service in the Red Army.

17

The commander's additional ration, established by the State Defense Committee in October 1941 as a monthly allowance for a soldier's food allowance, which included: up to 1 kg of butter, biscuits, sugar, cigarettes, 2-3 cans of canned meat.

18

Guardhouse - a room at a military unit where violators of military discipline.

19

GUKE "Smersh" - Main Directorate of Counterintelligence "Smersh" of the NKVD of the USSR until April 1943, after being part of the People's Commissariat of Defense until 1946 and in the Ministry of State Security of the USSR 3rd Main Directorate; since 1954 in the KGB of the USSR 3rd Directorate.

20

Ausweiss - a pass in the occupied zone (*in German*).

21

"Abverstelle" - a peripheral department of military intelligence of the armed forces of Nazi Germany.

22

"Sudoplatovskoye economy" - during the Great Patriotic War, the 4th Directorate of the NKVD of the USSR was the leading body for sabotage and terrorist activities against Nazi Germany. His chief is Lieutenant General Sudoplatov P.A. (1904–1996).

23

"Psya krev" is a Polish swear word for "dog's blood".

24

"From mozh to mozh" - translated from Polish "from sea to sea."

25

Bulak-Bulakhovich - one of the leaders of the White movement in the border area of the North-Western Territory.

26

"Sonderkommando R" - anti-partisan unit,
created under the Abwehr in 1942.

27

That was the name of the leading center of the OUN.

28

"HF" - high-frequency government communications, excluding
eavesdropping by the enemy.

29

By the decision of the People's Commissar of Defense (it was I.V. Stalin from 07/19/41 to 1947), the military counterintelligence agencies from the NKO were transferred to the NKVD. On April 14, 1943, the return transition of the Main Directorate of Military Counterintelligence "Smersh" to the NPO took place. (Encyclopedia BOB. - M., 1985, p. 662.)

thirty

Mekhlis Lev Zakharovich (1899-1953) - in 1937-1940. head of the GlavPU of the Red Army. In 1942, being a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the Crimean Front, he did not provide for the organization of defense, and was relieved of his posts. In 1942–1945 - Member of the Military Council on six fronts. In 1940-50s. - People's Commissar (min.) of the State Control of the USSR. - Encyclopedia of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. - M., 1985, p. 445.

The Special Meeting of the NKVD of the USSR is an extrajudicial body with simplified proceedings. It was canceled only on September 1, 1953.

"Troikas" consisting of the prosecutor of the region (territory), the head of the UNKVD, the secretary of the regional party committee or the chairman of the Regional Executive Committee existed in 1936-1938.

33

Under a "foreign" flag - a technique used by special services, when it is unprofitable for the recruiter to indicate his country.

Smolensk party archive - during the retreat of our troops, it was captured by the Germans in August 1941 and sent to Germany. The archive ended up in the zone of occupation by American troops and was taken to the United States in May 1945. On its basis, R. Conquist wrote the book "The Great Terror" in the early 70s.

35

Shkiryatov F.M. - Chairman of the Party Control Commission under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks from 1934 to 1956.

36

General Lukin M.F. (1892-1970) - commander of the 16th, 19th, 20th armies, led the defense of Smolensk. He was wounded and taken prisoner. He refused General Vlasov's proposal to create the ROA (Russian Liberation Army). Released in May 1945 by the Americans.

37

Glavlit - Main Directorate for Literature and Publishing. Created on 06/06/1922 under the People's Commissariat of Education; carried out political, ideological, military, economic control and censorship functions in literature and art. Canceled by the law of the Russian Federation in 1993.

38

TOZ - a partnership for the joint cultivation of the land as a form of cooperation between peasants before collective farm construction.

MTS - machine and tractor stations. They arose together with the collective farms as State enterprises for the processing of collective farm and state farm lands.

40

Pens - personal plots of land that existed before collectivization.

41

Guy is a legendary hero of the civil war. His division in 1918 participated in the battles against the Whites and liberated the cities of Simbirsk and Samara. Arrested in 1937, escaped from the Stolypin carriage while being transported, sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. In 1993, the "iron division" was still part of the Moscow Military District. ***(Personal archive of the author.)***

42

Sokolovsky V.D. (1897-1968) commanded the Western Front (February 1943 - April 1944) with the rank of army general. Mutual animosity with Member of the Swarm Council Mehlis served as their transfer to other fronts by order of the Supreme Commander. In 1946 V.D. Sokolovsky was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Forces in Germany; Marshal of the Soviet Union

43

Olga Chekhova - wife of the great Russian actor Mikhail Chekhov;
emigrated from Soviet Russia in 1925.

For the eviction of the peoples of the North Caucasus and the Kalmyks, L.P. was awarded the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree. Beria, 2nd degree - Generals Serov and Kobulov.

45

PC - secret control over correspondence by the State Security authorities suspected of hostile activity (***author's note***).

46

Zavirukha - blizzard (*Belarusian*).

47

HTC - People's Labor Union. A political party of an anti-Soviet bias, created by white émigrés in the 1920s, known for its publications in the post-war period: "Posev", "Grani", etc.

Nasedkin - senior major of state security; personality is not fictional. As People's Commissar, he forced Belarus, in 1939 he was convicted by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for abuse of office and sentenced to death. He was replaced by a protege L.P. Beria - Tsanava Lavrenty (***author's note***).

49

Main Directorate for the construction of highways,
was in the NKVD system, then the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs until 1954.